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# *The* PATHFINDER

BY  
JAMES FENIMORE COOPER



*"With the wind of God in her  
vesture, proclaiming the deathless,  
ever-soaring spirit of man."—Locke*

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# THE PATHFINDER

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## CHAPTER I

THE sublimity connected with vastness is familiar to every eye. The most abstruse, the most far-reaching, perhaps the most chastened of the poet's thoughts, crowd on the imagination as he gazes into the depths of the illimitable void. The expanse of the ocean is seldom seen by the novice with indifference; and the mind, even in the obscurity of night, finds a parallel to that grandeur, which seems inseparable from images that the senses cannot compass. With feelings akin to this admiration and awe—the offspring of sublimity—were the different characters with which the action of this tale must open, gazing on the scene before them. Four persons in all,—two of each sex,—they had managed to ascend a pile of trees, that had been upturned by a tempest, to catch a view of the objects that surrounded them. It is still the practice of the country to call these spots wind-rows. By letting in the light of heaven upon the dark and damp recesses of the wood, they form a sort of oases in the solemn obscurity of the virgin forests of America. The particular wind-row of which we are writing lay on the brow of a gentle acclivity; and, though small, it had opened the way for an extensive view to those who might occupy its upper margin, a rare occurrence to the traveller in the woods. On the upper margin of the opening, the viewless influence had piled tree on tree, in such a manner as had not only enabled the two males of the party to ascend to an elevation of some thirty feet above the level of the earth, but, with a little care and encouragement, to induce their more timid companions to accompany them. The vast trunks which had been broken and driven by the force of the gust lay blended like jack-straws; while their branches, still exhaling the fragrance of withering leaves, were interlaced in a manner to afford sufficient support to the hands. One tree had been completely uprooted, and its lower end, filled with earth, had been cast uppermost, in a way to supply a sort of staging for the four adventurers, when they had gained the desired distance from the ground.

They were all wayfarers in the wilderness; and had they not been, neither their previous habits, nor their actual social positions, would have accustomed them to many of the luxuries of rank. Two of the party, indeed, a male and female, belonged to the native owners of the soil, being Indians of the well-known tribe of the Tuscaroras; while their companions were—a man, who bore about him the peculiarities of one who had passed his days on the ocean, and was, too, in a station little, if any, above that of a common mariner; and his female associate, who was a maiden of a class in no great degree superior to his own; though her youth, sweetness of countenance, and a modest, but spirited mien, lent that character of intellect and refinement which adds so much to the charm of beauty in the sex. On the present occasion, her full blue eye reflected the feeling of sublimity that the scene excited, and her pleasant face was beaming with the pensive expression with which all deep emotions, even though they bring the most grateful pleasure, shadow the countenances of the ingenuous and thoughtful.

And truly the scene was of a nature deeply to impress the imagination of the beholder. Towards the west, in which direction the faces of the party were turned, the eye ranged over an ocean of leaves, glorious and rich in the varied and lively verdure of a generous vegetation, and shaded by the luxuriant tints which belong to the forty-second degree of latitude.

It was the vastness of the view, the nearly unbroken surface of verdure, that contained the principle of grandeur. The beauty was to be traced in the delicate tints, relieved by gradations of light and shade; while the solemn repose induced the feeling allied to awe.

"Uncle," said the wondering, but pleased girl, addressing her male companion, whose arm she rather touched than leaned on, to steady her own light but firm footing, "this is like a view of the ocean you so much love!"

"So much for ignorance, and a girl's fancy, Magnet,"—a term of affection the sailor often used in allusion to his niece's personal attractions; "no one but a child would think of likening this handful of leaves to a look at the real Atlantic. You might seize all these tree-tops to Neptune's jacket, and they would make no more than a nosegay for his bosom."

"More fanciful than true, I think, uncle. Look thither;

it must be miles on miles, and yet we see nothing but leaves! what more could one behold, if looking at the ocean?"

"More!" returned the uncle, giving an impatient gesture with the elbow the other touched, for his arms were crossed, and the hands were thrust into the bosom of a vest of red cloth, a fashion of the times,—“more, Magnet! say, rather, what less? Where are your combing seas, your blue water, your rollers, your breakers, your whales, or your waterspouts, and your endless motion, in this bit of a forest, child?"

"And where are your tree-tops, your solemn silence, your fragrant leaves, and your beautiful green, uncle, on the ocean?"

"Tut, Magnet! if you understand the thing, you would know that green water is a sailor's bane. He scarcely relishes a greenhorn less."

"But green trees are a different thing. Hist! that sound is the air breathing among the leaves!"

"You should hear a nor-wester breathe, girl, if you fancy wind aloft. Now, where are your gales, and hurricanes, and trades, and levanter, and such like incidents, in this bit of a forest? and what fishes have you swimming beneath yonder tame surface?"

"That there have been tempests here, these signs around us plainly show; and beasts, if not fishes, are beneath those leaves."

"I do not know that," returned the uncle, with a sailor's dogmatism. "They told us many stories at Albany of the wild animals we should fall in with, and yet we have seen nothing to frighten a seal. I doubt if any of your inland animals will compare with a low latitude shark."

"See!" exclaimed the niece, who was more occupied with the sublimity and beauty of the "boundless wood" than with her uncle's arguments; "yonder is a smoke curling over the tops of the trees—can it come from a house?"

"Ay, ay; there is a look of humanity in that smoke," returned the old seaman, "which is worth a thousand trees. I must show it to Arrowhead, who may be running past a port without knowing it. It is probable there is a caboose where there is a smoke."

As he concluded, the uncle drew a hand from his bosom, touched the male Indian, who was standing near him, lightly



on the shoulder, and pointed out a thin line of vapor which was stealing slowly out of the wilderness of leaves, at a distance of about a mile, and was diffusing itself in almost imperceptible threads of humidity in the quivering atmosphere. The Tuscarora was one of those noble-looking warriors oftener met with among the aborigines of this continent a century since than to-day; and, while he had mingled sufficiently with the colonists to be familiar with their habits and even with their language, he had lost little, if any, of the wild grandeur and simple dignity of a chief. Between him and the old seaman the intercourse had been friendly, but distant; for the Indian had been too much accustomed to mingle with the officers of the different military posts he had frequented not to understand that his present companion was only a subordinate. So imposing, indeed, had been the quiet superiority of the Tuscarora's reserve, that Charles Cap, for so was the seaman named, in his most dogmatical or facetious moments, had not ventured on familiarity in an intercourse which had now lasted more than a week. The sight of the curling smoke, however, had struck the latter like the sudden appearance of a sail at sea; and, for the first time since they met, he ventured to touch the warrior, as has been related.

The quick eye of the Tuscarora instantly caught a sight of the smoke; and for full a minute he stood, slightly raised on tiptoe, with distended nostrils, like the buck that scents a taint in the air, and a gaze as riveted as that of the trained pointer while he waits his master's aim. Then, falling back on his feet, a low exclamation, in the soft tones that form so singular a contrast to its harsher cries in the Indian warrior's voice, was barely audible; otherwise, he was undisturbed. His countenance was calm, and his quick, dark, eagle eye moved over the leafy panorama, as if to take in at a glance every circumstance that might enlighten his mind. That the long journey they had attempted to make through a broad belt of wilderness was necessarily attended with danger, both uncle and niece well knew; though neither could at once determine whether the sign that others were in their vicinity was the harbinger of good or evil.

"There must be Oneidas or Tuscaroras near us, Arrow-head," said Cap, addressing his Indian companion by his conventional English name; "will it not be well to join

company with them, and get a comfortable berth for the night in their wigwam?"

"No wigwam there," Arrowhead answered in his unmoved manner—"too much tree."

"But Indians must be there; perhaps some old mess-mates of your own, Master Arrowhead."

"No Tuscarora—no Oneida—no Mohawk—pale-face fire."

"The devil it is! Well, Magnet, this surpasses a seaman's philosophy: we old sea-dogs can tell a lubber's nest from a mate's hammock; but I do not think the oldest admiral in his Majesty's fleet can tell a king's smoke from a collier's."

The idea that human beings were in their vicinity, in that ocean of wilderness, had deepened the flush on the blooming cheek and brightened the eye of the fair creature at his side; but she soon turned with a look of surprise to her relative, and said hesitatingly, for both had often admired the Tuscarora's knowledge, or, we might almost say, instinct,—

"A pale-face's fire! Surely, uncle, he cannot know *that*?"

"Ten days since, child, I would have sworn to it; but now I hardly know what to believe. May I take the liberty of asking, Arrowhead, why you fancy that smoke, now, a pale-face's smoke, and not a red-skin's?"

"Wet wood," returned the warrior, with the calmness with which the pedagogue might point out an arithmetical demonstration to his puzzled pupil. "Much wet—much smoke; much water—black smoke."

"But, begging your pardon, Master Arrowhead, the smoke is not black, nor is there much of it. To my eye, now, it is as light and fanciful a smoke as ever rose from a captain's tea-kettle, when nothing was left to make the fire but a few chips from the dunnage."

"Too much water," returned Arrowhead, with a slight nod of the head; "Tuscarora too cunning to make fire with water! pale-face too much book, and burn anything; much book, little know."

"Well, that's reasonable, I allow," said Cap, who was no devotee of learning: "he means that as a hit at your reading, Magnet; for the chief has sensible notions of things in his own way. How far, now, Arrowhead, do you make us, by your calculation, from the bit of a pond that you call the Great Lake, and towards which we have been so many days shaping our course?"

The Tuscarora looked at the seaman with quiet superi-

ority as he answered, "Ontario, like heaven; one sun, and the great traveller will know it."

"Well, I have been a great traveller, I cannot deny; but of all my v'y'ges this has been the longest, the least profitable, and the farthest inland. If this body of fresh water is so nigh, Arrowhead, and so large, one might think a pair of good eyes would find it out; for apparently everything within thirty miles is to be seen from this lookout."

"Look," said Arrowhead, stretching an arm before him with quiet grace; "Ontario!"

"Uncle, you are accustomed to cry 'Land ho!' but not 'Water ho!' and you do not see it," cried the niece, laughing, as girls will laugh at their own idle conceits.

"How now, Magnet! dost suppose that I shouldn't know my native element, if it were in sight?"

"But Ontario is not your native element, dear uncle; for you come from the salt water, while this is fresh."

"That might make some difference to your young mariner, but none to the old one. I should know water, child, were I to see it in China."

"Ontario," repeated Arrowhead, with emphasis, again stretching his hand towards the north-west.

Cap looked at the Tuscarora, for the first time since their acquaintance, with something like an air of contempt, though he did not fail to follow the direction of the chief's eye and arm, both of which were directed towards a vacant point in the heavens, a short distance above the plain of leaves.

"Ay, ay; this is much as I expected, when I left the coast in search of a fresh-water pond," resumed Cap, shrugging his shoulders like one whose mind was made up, and who thought no more need be said. "Ontario may be there, or, for that matter, it may be in my pocket. Well, I suppose there will be room enough, when we reach it, to work our canoe. But, Arrowhead, if there be pale-faces in our neighborhood, I confess I should like to get within hail of them."

The Tuscarora now gave a quiet inclination of his head, and the whole party descended from the roots of the up-torn tree in silence. When they reached the ground, Arrowhead intimated his intention to go towards the fire, and ascertain who had lighted it; while he advised his wife and the two others to return to a canoe, which they had left in the adjacent stream, and await his return.

"Why, chief, this might do on soundings, and in an offing where one knew the channel," returned old Cap; "but in an unknown region like this, I think it unsafe to trust the pilot alone too far from the ship: so, with your leave, we will not part company."

"What my brother want?" asked the Indian gravely, though without taking offence at a distrust that was sufficiently plain.

"Your company, Master Arrowhead, and no more. I will go with you and speak these strangers."

The Tuscarora assented without difficulty, and again he directed his patient and submissive little wife, who seldom turned her full rich black eye on him but to express equally her respect, her dread, and her love, to proceed to the boat. But here Magnet raised a difficulty. Although spirited, and of unusual energy under circumstances of trial, she was but woman; and the idea of being entirely deserted by her two male protectors, in the midst of a wilderness that her senses had just told her was seemingly illimitable, became so keenly painful, that she expressed a wish to accompany her uncle.

"The exercise will be a relief, dear sir, after sitting so long in the canoe," she added, as the rich blood slowly returned to a cheek that had paled in spite of her efforts to be calm; "and there may be females with the strangers."

"Come, then, child; it is but a cable's length, and we shall return an hour before the sun sets."

With this permission, the girl, whose real name was Mabel Dunham, prepared to be of the party; while the Dew-of-June, as the wife of Arrowhead was called, passively went her way towards the canoe, too much accustomed to obedience, solitude, and the gloom of the forest to feel apprehension.

The three who remained in the wind-row now picked their way around its tangled maze, and gained the margin of the woods. A few glances of the eye sufficed for Arrowhead; but old Cap deliberately set the smoke by a pocket-compass, before he trusted himself within the shadows of the trees.

"This steering by the nose, Magnet, may do well enough for an Indian, but your thoroughbred knows the virtue of the needle," said the uncle, as he trudged at the heels of the light-stepping Tuscarora. "America would never have been discovered, take my word for it, if Columbus had



been nothing but nostrils. Friend Arrowhead, didst ever see a machine like this?"

The Indian turned, cast a glance at the compass, which Cap held in a way to direct his course, and gravely answered, "A pale-face eye. The Tuscarora see in his head. The Salt-water (for so the Indian styled his companion) all eye now; no tongue."

"He means, uncle, that we had needs be silent; perhaps he distrusts the persons we are about to meet."

"Ay, 'tis an Indian's fashion of going to quarters. You perceive he has examined the priming of his rifle, and it may be well if I look to that of my own pistols."

Without betraying alarm at these preparations, to which she had become accustomed by her long journey in the wilderness, Mabel followed with a step as elastic as that of the Indian, keeping close in the rear of her companions. For the first half mile no other caution beyond a rigid silence was observed; but as the party drew nearer to the spot where the fire was known to be, much greater care became necessary.

The forest, as usual, had little to intercept the view below the branches but the tall straight trunks of trees. Everything belonging to vegetation had struggled towards the light, and beneath the leafy canopy one walked, as it might be, through a vast natural vault, upheld by myriads of rustic columns. These columns or trees, however, often served to conceal the adventurer, the hunter, or the foe; and, as Arrowhead swiftly approached the spot where his practised and unerring senses told him the strangers ought to be, his footstep gradually became lighter, his eye more vigilant, and his person was more carefully concealed.

"See, Saltwater," said he exultingly, pointing through the vista of trees; "pale-face fire!"

"By the Lord, the fellow is right!" muttered Cap; "there they are, sure enough, and eating their grub as quietly as if they were in the cabin of a three-decker."

"Arrowhead is but half right!" whispered Mabel; "for there are two Indians and only one white man."

"Pale-faces," said the Tuscarora, holding up two fingers; "red man," holding up one.

"Well," rejoined Cap, "it is hard to say which is right and which is wrong. One is entirely white, and a fine comely lad he is, with an air of respectability about him; one is a red-skin as plain as paint and nature can make



him; but the third chap is half-rigged, being neither brig nor schooner."

"Pale-faces," repeated Arrowhead, again raising two fingers; "red man," showing but one.

"He must be right, uncle; for his eye seems never to fail. But it is now urgent to know whether we meet as friends or foes. They may be French."

"One hail will soon satisfy us on that head," returned Cap. "Stand you behind the tree, Magnet, lest the knaves take it into their heads to fire a broadside without a parley, and I will soon learn what colors they sail under."

The uncle had placed his two hands to his mouth to form a trumpet, and was about to give the promised hail, when a rapid movement from the hand of Arrowhead defeated the intention by deranging the instrument.

"Red man, Mohican," said the Tuscarora; "good; pale-faces, Yengeese."

"These are heavenly tidings," murmured Mabel, who little relished the prospect of a deadly fray in that remote wilderness. "Let us approach at once, dear uncle, and proclaim ourselves friends."

"Good," said the Tuscarora; "red man cool, and know; pale-face hurried, and fire. Let the squaw go."

"What!" said Cap in astonishment; "send little Magnet ahead as a lookout, while two lubbers, like you and me, lie-to to see what sort of a land-fall she will make! If I do, I—"

"It is wisest, uncle," interrupted the generous girl, "and I have no fear. No Christian, seeing a woman approach alone, would fire upon her; and my presence will be a pledge of peace. Let me go forward, as Arrowhead wishes, and all will be well. We are, as yet, unseen, and the surprise of the strangers will not partake of alarm."

"Good," returned Arrowhead, who did not conceal his approbation of Mabel's spirit.

"It has an unseaman-like look," answered Cap; "but, being in the woods, no one will know it. If you think, Mabel—"

"Uncle, I know. There is no cause to fear for me; and you are always nigh to protect me."

"Well, take one of the pistols, then—"

"Nay, I had better rely on my youth and feebleness," said the girl, smiling, while her color heightened under her feelings. "Among Christian men, a woman's best guard is her

claim to their protection. I know nothing of arms, and wish to live in ignorance of them."

The uncle desisted; and, after receiving a few cautious instructions from the Tuscarora, Mabel rallied all her spirit, and advanced alone towards the group seated near the fire. Although the heart of the girl beat quick, her step was firm, and her movements, seemingly, were without reluctance. A death-like silence reigned in the forest, for they towards whom she approached were too much occupied in appeasing their hunger to avert their looks for an instant from the important business in which they were all engaged. When Mabel, however, had got within a hundred feet of the fire, she trod upon a dried stick, and the trifling noise produced by her light footstep caused the Mohican, as Arrowhead had pronounced the Indian to be, and his companion, whose character had been thought so equivocal, to rise to their feet, as quick as thought. Both glanced at the rifles that leaned against a tree; and then each stood without stretching out an arm, as his eyes fell on the form of the girl. The Indian uttered a few words to his companion, and resumed his seat and his meal as calmly as if no interruption had occurred. On the contrary, the white man left the fire, and came forward to meet Mabel.

The latter saw, as the stranger approached, that she was about to be addressed by one of her own color, though his dress was so strange a mixture of the habits of the two races, that it required a near look to be certain of the fact. He was of middle age; but there was an open honesty, a total absence of guile, in his face, which otherwise would not have been thought handsome, that at once assured Magnet she was in no danger. Still she paused.

"Fear nothing, young woman," said the hunter, for such his attire would indicate him to be; "you have met Christian men in the wilderness, and such as know how to treat all kindly who are disposed to peace and justice. I am a man well known in all these parts, and perhaps one of my names may have reached your ears. By the Frenchers and the red-skins on the other side of the Big Lakes, I am called La Longue Carabine; by the Mohicans, a just-minded and upright tribe, what is left of them, Hawk Eye; while the troops and rangers along this side of the water call me Pathfinder, inasmuch as I have never been known to miss one end of the trail, when there was a

Mingo, or a friend who stood in need of me, at the other."

This was not uttered boastfully, but with the honest confidence of one who well knew that by whatever name others might have heard of him, he had no reason to blush at the reports. The effect on Mabel was instantaneous. The moment she heard the last *sobriquet* she clasped her hands eagerly and repeated the word "Pathfinder!"

"So they call me, young woman, and many a great lord has got a title that he did not half so well merit; though, if truth be said, I rather pride myself in finding my way where there is no path, than in finding it where there is. But the regular troops are by no means particular, and half the time they don't know the difference between a trail and a path, though one is a matter for the eye, while the other is little more than scent."

"Then you are the friend my father promised to send to meet us?"

"If you are Sergeant Dunham's daughter, the great Prophet of the Delawares never uttered more truth."

"I am Mabel; and yonder, hid by the trees, are my uncle, whose name is Cap, and a Tuscarora called Arrowhead. We did not hope to meet you until we had nearly reached the shores of the lake."

"I wish a juster-minded Indian had been your guide," said Pathfinder; "for I am no lover of the Tuscaroras, who have travelled too far from the graves of their fathers always to remember the Great Spirit; and Arrowhead is an ambitious chief. Is the Dew-of-June with him?"

"His wife accompanies us, and a humble and mild creature she is."

"Ay, and true-hearted; which is more than any who know him will say of Arrowhead. Well, we must take the fare that Providence bestows, while we follow the trail of life. I suppose worse guides might have been found than the Tuscarora; though he has too much Mingo blood for one who consorts altogether with the Delawares."

"It is, then, perhaps, fortunate we have met," said Mabel.

"It is not misfortunate, at any rate; for I promised the Sergeant I would see his child safe to the garrison, though I died for it. We expected to meet you before you reached the Falls, where we have left our own canoe; while we thought it might do no harm to come up a few miles, in order to be of service if wanted. It is lucky we did, for I doubt if Arrowhead be the man to shoot the current."

"Here come my uncle and the Tuscarora, and our parties can now join." As Mabel concluded, Cap and Arrowhead, who saw that the conference was amicable, drew nigh; and a few words sufficed to let them know as much as the girl herself had learned from the strangers. As soon as this was done, the party proceeded towards the two who still remained near the fire.

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## CHAPTER II

THE Mohican continued to eat, though the second white man rose, and courteously took off his cap to Mabel Dunham. He was young, healthful, and manly in appearance; and he wore a dress which, while it was less rigidly professional than that of the uncle, also denoted one accustomed to the water. In that age, real seamen were a class entirely apart from the rest of mankind, their ideas, ordinary language, and attire being as strongly indicative of their calling as the opinions, speech, and dress of a Turk denote a Mussulman. Although the Pathfinder was scarcely in the prime of life, Mabel had met him with a steadiness that may have been the consequence of having braced her nerves for the interview; but when her eyes encountered those of the young man at the fire, they fell before the gaze of admiration with which she saw, or fancied she saw, he greeted her. Each, in truth, felt that interest in the other which similarity of age, condition, mutual comeliness, and their novel situation would be likely to inspire in the young and ingenuous.

"Here," said Pathfinder, with an honest smile bestowed on Mabel, "are the friends your worthy father has sent to meet you. This is a great Delaware; and one who has had honors as well as troubles in his day. He has an Indian name fit for a chief, but, as the language is not always easy for the inexperienced to pronounce, we naturally turn it into English, and call him the Big Serpent. You are not to suppose, however, that by this name we wish to say that he is treacherous, beyond what is lawful in a red-skin; but that he is wise, and has the cunning which becomes a warrior. Arrowhead, there, knows what I mean."

While the Pathfinder was delivering this address, the two Indians gazed on each other steadily, and the Tus-



carora advanced and spoke to the other in an apparently friendly manner.

"I like to see this," continued Pathfinder; "the salutes of two red-skins in the words, Master Cap, are like the hailing of friendly vessels on the ocean. But speaking of water, it reminds me of my young friend, Jasper Western here, who can claim to know something of these matters, seeing that he has passed his days on Ontario."

"I am glad to see you, friend," said Cap, giving the young fresh-water sailor a cordial grip; "though you must have something still to learn, considering the school to which you have been sent. This is my niece Mabel; I call her Magnet, for a reason she never dreams of, though you may possibly have education enough to guess at it, having some pretensions to understand the compass, I suppose."

"The reason is easily comprehended," said the young man, involuntarily fastening his keen dark eye, at the same time, on the suffused face of the girl; "and I feel sure that the sailor who steers by your Magnet will never make a bad land-fall."

"Ha! you do make use of some of the terms, I find, and that with propriety; though, on the whole, I fear you have seen more green than blue water."

"It is not surprising that we should get some of the phrases which belong to the land; for we are seldom out of sight of it twenty-four hours at a time."

"More's the pity, boy, more's the pity! A very little land ought to go a great way with a seafaring man. Now, if the truth were known, Master Western, I suppose there is more or less land all round your lake."

"And, uncle, is there not more or less land around the ocean?" said Magnet quickly; for she dreaded a premature display of the old seaman's peculiar dogmatism, not to say pedantry.

"No, child, there is more or less ocean all round the land; that's what I tell the people ashore, youngster. They are living, as it might be, in the midst of the sea, without knowing it; by sufferance, as it were, the water being so much the more powerful and the largest. But there is no end to conceit in this world: for a fellow who never saw salt water often fancies he knows more than one who has gone round the Horn. No, no, this earth is pretty much an island; and all that can be truly said not to be so is water."



The party had taken their places around a platter of venison steaks, which served for the common use, and the discourse naturally partook of the characters of the different individuals which composed it. The Indians were silent and industrious, the appetite of the aboriginal American for venison being seemingly inappeasable, while the two white men were communicative, each of the latter being garrulous and opinionated in his way.

The canoe in which Cap and his party had travelled from Fort Stanwix, the last military station on the Mohawk, lay by the side of the river, and when they had talked the situation over and were agreed on the course to pursue the whole party entered it, with the exception of Pathfinder, who remained on the land, in order to shove the light vessel off.

"Let her starn drift down stream, Jasper," said the man of the woods to the young mariner of the lake, who had dispossessed Arrowhead of his paddle and taken his own station as steersman; "let it go down with the current. Should any of these infarnals, the Mingos, strike our trail, or follow it to this point, they will not fail to look for the signs in the mud; and if they discover that we have left the shore with the nose of the canoe up stream, it is a natural belief to think we went up stream."

This direction was followed; and, giving a vigorous shove, the Pathfinder, who was in the flower of his strength and activity, made a leap, landing lightly, and without disturbing its equilibrium, in the bow of the canoe. As soon as it had reached the centre of the river or the strength of the current, the boat was turned, and it began to glide noiselessly down the stream.

Cap was seated on a low thwart, in the centre of the canoe; the Big Serpent knelt near him. Arrowhead and his wife occupied places forward of both, the former having relinquished his post aft. Mabel was half reclining behind her uncle, while the Pathfinder and Eau-douce stood erect, the one in the bow, and the other in the stern, each using a paddle, with a long, steady, noiseless sweep. The conversation was carried on in low tones, all the party beginning to feel the necessity of prudence, as they drew nearer to the outskirts of the fort, and had no longer the cover of the woods.

The Oswego, just at that place, was a deep dark stream of no great width, its still, gloomy-looking current wind-

ing its way among overhanging trees, which, in particular spots, almost shut out the light of the heavens. Here and there some half-fallen giant of the forest lay nearly across its surface, rendering care necessary to avoid the limbs; and most of the distance, the lower branches and leaves of the trees of smaller growth were laved by its waters.

"I sometimes wish for peace again," said the Pathfinder, "when one can range the forest without searching for any other enemy than the beasts and fishes. Ah's me! many is the day that Serpent, there, and I have passed happily among the streams, living on venison, salmon, and trout, without thought of a Mingo or a scalp! I sometimes wish that them blessed days might come back, for it is not my real gift to slay my own kind. I'm sartain the Sergeant's daughter don't think me a wretch that takes pleasure in preying on human natur'?"

As this remark, a sort of half interrogatory, was made, Pathfinder looked behind him; and, though the most partial friend could scarcely term his sunburnt and hard features handsome, even Mabel thought his smile attractive, by its simple ingenuousness and the uprightness that beamed in every lineament of his honest countenance.

"I do not think my father would have sent one like those you mention to see his daughter through the wilderness," the young woman answered, returning the smile as frankly as it was given, but much more sweetly.

"That he wouldn't; the Sergeant is a man of feeling, and many is the march and the fight that we have had—stood shoulder to shoulder in, as *he* would call it—though I always keep my limbs free when near a Frencher or a Mingo."

"You are, then, the young friend of whom my father has spoken so often in his letters?"

"His *young* friend—the Sergeant has the advantage of me by thirty years; yes, he is thirty years my senior, and as many my better."

"Not in the eyes of the daughter, perhaps, friend Pathfinder," put in Cap, whose spirits began to revive when he found the water once more flowing around him. "The thirty years that you mention are not often thought to be an advantage in the eyes of girls of nineteen."

Mabel colored; and, in turning aside her face to avoid the looks of those in the bow of the canoe, she encountered the admiring gaze of the young man in the stern. As a

last resource, her spirited but soft blue eyes sought refuge in the water.

In due time the party reached the place where Jasper had left his own canoe, concealed in the bushes, and they all re-embarked; Cap, Jasper, and his niece in one boat, and Pathfinder, Arrowhead, and the wife of the latter in the other. The Mohican had already passed down the banks of the river by land, looking cautiously and with the skill of his people for the signs of an enemy.

The cheek of Mabel did not recover all its bloom until the canoe was again in the current, down which it floated swiftly, occasionally impelled by the paddle of Jasper. As the other canoe kept quite near her own, and the Pathfinder, by floating at her side, was most in view, the conversation was principally maintained with that person; Jasper seldom speaking unless addressed, and constantly exhibiting a weariness in the management of his own boat, which might have been remarked by one accustomed to his ordinarily confident, careless manner.

"Ha, Eau-douce!" exclaimed Pathfinder, "what is that in the river, at the lower turn, yonder, beneath the bushes,—I mean standing on the rock?"

"'Tis the Big Serpent, Pathfinder; he is making signs to us in a way I don't understand."

"'Tis the Sarpent, as sure as I'm a white man, and he wishes us to drop in nearer to his shore. Mischief is brewing, or one of his deliberation and steadiness would never take this trouble. Courage, all! we are men, and must meet devilry as becomes our color and our callings. Ah, I never knew good come of boasting! and here, just as I was vaunting of our safety, comes danger to give me the lie."

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### CHAPTER III

THE Oswego, below the falls, is a more rapid, unequal stream than it is above them. There are places where the river flows in the quiet stillness of deep water, but many shoals and rapids occur; and at that distant day, when everything was in its natural state, some of the passes were not altogether without hazard. Very little exertion was required on the part of those who managed the canoes,

except in those places where the swiftness of the current and the presence of the rocks required care; then, indeed, not only vigilance, but great coolness, readiness, and strength of arm became necessary, in order to avoid the dangers. Of all this the Mohican was aware, and he had judiciously selected a spot where the river flowed tranquilly to intercept the canoes, in order to make his communication without hazard to those he wished to speak.

The Pathfinder had no sooner recognized the form of his red friend, than, with a strong sweep of his paddle, he threw the head of his own canoe towards the shore, motioning for Jasper to follow. In a minute both boats were silently drifting down the stream, within reach of the bushes that overhung the water, all observing a profound silence; some from alarm, and others from habitual caution. As the travellers drew nearer the Indian, he made a sign for them to stop; and then he and Pathfinder had a short but earnest conference.

"The chief is not apt to see enemies in a dead log," observed the white man to his red associate; "why does he tell us to stop?"

"Mingos are in the woods."

"That we have believed these two days: does the chief know it?"

The Mohican quietly held up the head of a pipe formed of stone.

"It lay on a fresh trail that led towards the garrison,"—for so it was the usage of that frontier to term a military work, whether it was occupied or not.

"That may be the bowl of a pipe belonging to a soldier. Many use the red-skin pipes."

"See," said the Big Serpent, again holding the thing he had found up to the view of his friend.

The bowl of the pipe was of soap-stone, and was carved with great care and with a very respectable degree of skill; in its centre was a small Latin cross, made with an accuracy which permitted no doubt of its meaning.

"That does foretell devilry and wickedness," said the Pathfinder, who had all the provincial horror of the holy symbol in question which then pervaded the country, and which became so incorporated with its prejudices, by confounding men with things, as to have left its traces strong enough on the moral feeling of the community to be discovered even at the present hour; "no Indian who had



not been parvarted by the cunning priests of the Canadas would dream of carving a thing like that on his pipe. I'll warrant ye, the knave prays to the image every time he wishes to sarcumvent the innocent, and work his fearful wickedness. It looks fresh, too, Chingachgook?"

"The tobacco was burning when I found it."

"That is close work, chief. Where was the trail?"

The Mohican pointed to a spot not a hundred yards from that where they stood.

The matter now began to look very serious, and the two principal guides conferred apart for several minutes, when both ascended the bank, approached the indicated spot, and examined the trail with the utmost care. After this investigation had lasted a quarter of an hour, the white man returned alone, his red friend having disappeared in the forest.

The ordinary expression of the countenance of the Pathfinder was that of simplicity, integrity, and sincerity, blended in an air of self-reliance which usually gave great confidence to those who found themselves under his care; but now a look of concern cast a shade over his honest face, that struck the whole party.

"What cheer, Master Pathfinder?" demanded Cap, permitting a voice that was usually deep, loud, and confident to sink into the cautious tones that better suited the dangers of the wilderness. "Has the enemy got between us and our port?"

"Anan?"

"Have any of these painted scaramouches anchored off the harbor towards which we are running, with the hope of cutting us off in entering?"

"It may be all as you say, friend Cap, but I am none the wiser for your words; and in ticklish times the plainer a man makes his English the easier he is understood. I know nothing of ports and anchors; but there is a direful Mingo trail within a hundred yards of this very spot, and as fresh as venison without salt. If one of the fiery devils has passed, so have a dozen; and, what is worse, they have gone down towards the garrison, and not a soul crosses the clearing around it that some of their piercing eyes will not discover, when sartain bullets will follow."

"Cannot this said fort deliver a broadside, and clear everything within the sweep of its hawse?"

"Nay, the forts this-a-way are not like forts in the set-



lements, and two or three light cannon are all they have down at the mouth of the river; and then, broadsides fired at a dozen outlying Mingoes, lying behind logs and in a forest, would be powder spent in vain. We have but one course, and that is a very nice one. We are judgmatically placed here, both canoes being hid by the high bank and the bushes, from all eyes, except those of any lurker directly opposite. Here, then, we may stay without much present fear; but how to get the bloodthirsty devils up the stream again? Ha! I have it, I have it! if it does no good, it can do no harm. Do you see the wide-topped chestnut here, Jasper, at the last turn in the river—on our own side of the stream, I mean?"

"That near the fallen pine?"

"The very same. Take the flint and tinder-box, creep along the bank, and light a fire at that spot; maybe the smoke will draw them above us. In the meanwhile, we will drop the canoes carefully down beyond the point below, and find another shelter. Bushes are plenty, and covers are easily to be had in this region, as witness the many ambushments."

"I will do it, Pathfinder," said Jasper, springing to the shore. "In ten minutes the fire shall be lighted."

"And, Eau-douce, use plenty of damp wood this time," half whispered the other, laughing heartily, in his own peculiar manner; "when smoke is wanted, water helps to thicken it."

The young man was soon off, making his way rapidly towards the desired point. A slight attempt of Mabel to object to the risk was disregarded, and the party immediately prepared to change its position, as it could be seen from the place where Jasper intended to light his fire. The movement did not require haste, and it was made leisurely and with care. The canoes were got clear of the bushes, then suffered to drop down with the stream until they reached the spot where the chestnut, at the foot of which Jasper was to light the fire, was almost shut out from view, when they stopped, and every eye was turned in the direction of the adventurer.

"There goes the smoke!" exclaimed the Pathfinder, as a current of air whirled a little column of the vapor from the land, allowing it to rise spirally above the bed of the river. "A good flint, a small bit of steel, and plenty of dry leaves make a quick fire. I hope Eau-douce will have

the wit to bethink him of the damp wood now when it may serve us all a good turn."

"Too much smoke—too much cunning," said Arrowhead sententiously.

"That is gopel truth, Tuscarora, if the Mingoes didn't know that they are near soldiers; but soldiers commonly think more of their dinner at a halt than of their wisdom and danger. No, no; let the boy pile on his logs, and smoke them well too; it will all be laid to the stupidity of some Scotch or Irish blunderer, who is thinking more of his oatmeal or his potatoes than of Indian sarcumventions or Indian rifles. There is smoke enough, of all conscience, and we had better drop into another cover. The lad has thrown the river on his fire, and there is danger that the Mingoes will believe a whole regiment is out."

While speaking, the Pathfinder permitted his canoe to drift away from the bush by which it had been retained, and in a couple of minutes the bend in the river concealed the smoke and the tree. Fortunately a small indentation in the shore presented itself, within a few yards of the point they had just passed; and the two canoes glided into it, under the impulsion of the paddles.

A better spot could not have been found for the purpose. The bushes were thick, and overhung the water, forming a complete canopy of leaves. There was a small gravelly strand at the bottom of the little bay, where most of the party landed to be more at their ease, and the only position from which they could possibly be seen was a point on the river directly opposite. There was little danger, however, of discovery from that quarter, as the thicket there was even denser than common, and the land beyond it was so wet and marshy as to render it difficult to be trodden.

"This is a safe cover," said the Pathfinder, after he had taken a scrutinizing survey of his position; "but it may be necessary to make it safer. Master Cap, I ask nothing of you but silence, and quieting of such gifts as you may have got at sea, while the Tuscarora and I make provision for the evil hour."

The guide then went a short distance into the bushes, accompanied by the Indian, where the two cut off the larger stems of several alders and other bushes, using the utmost care not to make a noise. The ends of these little trees were forced into the mud, outside of the canoes, the depth of

the water being very trifling; and in the course of ten minutes a very effectual screen was interposed between them and the principal point of danger. Much ingenuity and readiness were manifested in making this simple arrangement, in which the two workmen were essentially favored by the natural formation of the bank, the indentation in the shore, the shallowness of the water, and the manner in which the tangled bushes dipped into the stream. The Pathfinder had the address to look for bushes which had curved stems, things easily found in such a place; and by cutting them some distance beneath the bend, and permitting the latter to touch the water, the artificial little thicket had not the appearance of growing in the stream, which might have excited suspicion; but one passing it would have thought that the bushes shot out horizontally from the bank before they inclined upwards towards the light. In short, none but an unusually distrustful eye would have been turned for an instant towards the spot in quest of a hiding-place.

"This is the best cover I ever yet got into," said the Pathfinder, with his quiet laugh, after having been on the outside to reconnoitre; "the leaves of our new trees fairly touch those of the bushes over our heads. Hist!—yonder comes Eau-douce, wading, like a sensible boy, as he is, to leave his trail in the water; and we shall soon see whether our cover is good for anything or not."

Jasper had indeed returned from his duty above; and missing the canoes, he at once inferred that they had dropped round the next bend in the river, in order to get out of sight of the fire. His habits of caution immediately suggested the expediency of stepping into the water, in order that there might exist no visible communication between the marks left on the shore by the party and the place where he believed them to have taken refuge below. Should the Canadian Indians return on their own trail, and discover that made by the Pathfinder and the Serpent in their ascent from and descent to the river, the clue to their movements would cease at the shore, water leaving no print of footsteps. The young man had therefore waded, knee-deep, as far as the point, and was now seen making his way slowly down the margin of the stream, searching curiously for the spot in which the canoes were hid.

It was in the power of those behind the bushes, by placing their eyes near the leaves, to find many places to look through, while one at a little distance lost this advantage.

To those who watched his motions from behind their cover, and they were all in the canoes, it was evident that Jasper was totally at a loss to imagine where the Pathfinder had secreted himself. When fairly round the curvature in the shore, and out of sight of the fire he had lighted above, the young man stopped and began examining the bank deliberately and with great care. Occasionally he advanced eight or ten paces, and then halted again, to renew the search. The water being much shallower than common, he stepped aside, in order to walk with greater ease to himself, and came so near the artificial plantation that he might have touched it with his hand. Still he detected nothing, and was actually passing the spot when Pathfinder made an opening beneath the branches, and called to him in a low voice to enter.

"This is pretty well," said the Pathfinder, laughing; "though pale-face eyes and red-skin eyes are as different as human spy-glasses. I would wager, with the Sergeant's daughter here, a horn of powder against a wampum-belt for her girdle, that her father's rijiment should march by this embankment of ours and never find out the fraud! But if the Mingoes actually get down into the bed of the river where Jasper passed, I should tremble for the plantation. It will do for their eyes, even across the stream, however, and will not be without its use."

"Don't you think, Master Pathfinder, that it would be wisest, after all," said Cap, "to get under way at once, and carry sail hard down stream, as soon as we are satisfied that these rascals are fairly astern of us? We seamen call a stern chase a long chase."

"I wouldn't move from this spot until we hear from the Sarpent, with the Sergeant's pretty daughter here in our company, for all the powder in the magazine of the fort below. Sartain captivity or sartain death would follow. If a tender fa'n, such as the maiden we have in charge, could thread the forest like old deer, it might, indeed, do to quit the canoes; for by making a circuit we could reach the garrison before morning."

"Then let it be done," said Mabel, springing to her feet under the sudden impulse of awakened energy. "I am young, active, used to exercise, and could easily out-walk my dear uncle. Let no one think me a hindrance. I cannot bear that all your lives should be exposed on my account."



"No, no, pretty one; we think you anything but a hindrance or anything that is unbecoming, and would willingly run twice this risk to do you and the honest Sergeant a service. Do I not speak your mind, Eau-douce?"

"To do *her* a service!" said Jasper with emphasis. "Nothing shall tempt me to desert Mabel Dunham until she is safe in her father's arms."

"We had better leave the canoes," Mabel hurriedly rejoined; "for I feel it is no longer safe to be here."

"You can never do it; you can never do it. It would be a march of more than twenty miles, and that, too, of tramping over brush and roots, and through swamps, in the dark; the trail of such a party would be wide, and we might have to fight our way into the garrison after all. We will wait for the Mohican."

Such appearing to be the decision of him to whom all, in their present strait, looked up for counsel, no more was said on the subject. The whole party now broke up into groups: Arrowhead and his wife sitting apart under the bushes, conversing in a low tone, though the man spoke sternly, and the woman answered with the subdued mildness that marks the degraded condition of a savage's wife. Pathfinder and Cap occupied one canoe, chatting of their different adventures by sea and land; while Jasper and Mabel sat in the other, making greater progress in intimacy in a single hour than might have been effected under other circumstances in a twelvemonth. Notwithstanding their situation as regards the enemy, the time flew by swiftly, and the young people, in particular, were astonished when Cap informed them how long they had been thus occupied.

"If one could smoke, Master Pathfinder," observed the old sailor, "this berth would be snug enough; for, to give the devil his due, you have got the canoes handsomely landlocked, and into moorings that would defy a monsoon. The only hardship is the denial of the pipe."

"The scent of the tobacco would betray us; and where is the use of taking all these precautions against the Mingo's eyes, if we are to tell him where the cover is to be found through the nose? No, no; deny your appetites; and learn one virtue from a red-skin, who will pass a week without eating even, to get a single scalp. Did you hear nothing, Jasper?"

"The Serpent is coming."



"Then let us see if Mohican eyes are better than them of a lad who follows the water."

The Mohican had indeed made his appearance in the same direction as that by which Jasper had rejoined his friends. Instead of coming directly on, however, no sooner did he pass the bend, where he was concealed from any who might be higher up stream, than he moved close under the bank; and, using the utmost caution, got a position where he could look back, with his person sufficiently concealed by the bushes to prevent its being seen by any in that quarter.

"The Sarpent sees the knaves!" whispered Pathfinder. "As I'm a Christian white man, they have bit at the bait, and have ambushed the smoke!"

Here a hearty but silent laugh interrupted his words, and nudging Cap with his elbow, they all continued to watch the movements of Chingachgook in profound stillness. The Mohican remained stationary as the rock on which he stood full ten minutes; and then it was apparent that something of interest had occurred within his view, for he drew back with a hurried manner, looked anxiously and keenly along the margin of the stream, and moved quickly down it, taking care to lose his trail in the shallow water. He was evidently in a hurry and concerned, now looking behind him, and then casting eager glances towards every spot on the shore where he thought a canoe might be concealed.

"Call him in," whispered Jasper, scarcely able to restrain his impatience,—*"call him in, or it will be too late! See! he is actually passing us."*

"Not so, not so, lad; nothing presses, depend on it," returned his companion, "or the Sarpent would begin to creep. The Lord help us and teach us wisdom! I *do* believe even Chingachgook, whose sight is as faithful as the hound's scent, overlooks us, and will not find out the ambushment we have made!"

This exultation was untimely; for the words were no sooner spoken than the Indian, who had actually got several feet lower down the stream than the artificial cover, suddenly stopped; fastened a keen-riveted glance among the transplanted bushes; made a few hasty steps backward; and, bending his body and carefully separating the branches, he appeared among them.

"The accursed Mingos!" said Pathfinder, as soon as his friend was near enough to be addressed with prudence.

"Iroquois," returned the sententious Indian.

"No matter, no matter; Iroquois, devil, Mingo, Mengwes, or furies—all are pretty much the same. I call all rascals Mingos. Come hither, chief, and let us converse rationally."

When their private communication was over, Pathfinder rejoined the rest, and made them acquainted with all he had learned.

The Mohican had followed the trail of their enemies some distance towards the fort, until the latter caught a sight of the smoke of Jasper's fire, when they instantly retraced their steps. It now became necessary for Chingachgook, who ran the greatest risk of detection, to find a cover where he could secrete himself until the party might pass. It was perhaps fortunate for him that the savages were so intent on this recent discovery, that they did not bestow the ordinary attention on the signs of the forest. At all events, they passed him swiftly, fifteen in number, treading lightly in each other's footsteps; and he was enabled again to get into their rear. After proceeding to the place where the footsteps of Pathfinder and the Mohican had joined the principal trail, the Iroquois had struck off to the river, which they reached just as Jasper had disappeared behind the bend below. The smoke being now in plain view, the savages plunged into the woods and endeavored to approach the fire unseen. Chingachgook profited by this occasion to descend to the water, and to gain the bend in the river also, which he thought had been effected undiscovered. Here he paused, as has been stated, until he saw his enemies at the fire, where their stay, however, was very short.

Of the motives of the Iroquois the Mohican could judge only by their acts. He thought they had detected the artifice of the fire, and were aware that it had been kindled with a view to mislead them; for, after a hasty examination of the spot, they had separated, some plunging again into the woods, while six or eight had followed the footsteps of Jasper along the shore, and come down the stream towards the place where the canoes had landed. What course they might take on reaching that spot was only to be conjectured; for the Serpent had felt the emergency to be too pressing to delay looking for his friends any longer. From

some indications that were to be gathered from their gestures, however, he thought it probable that their enemies might follow down in the margin of the stream, but could not be certain.

As the Pathfinder related these facts to his companions, the professional feelings of the two other white men came uppermost, and both naturally reverted to their habits, in quest of the means of escape.

"Let us run out the canoes at once," said Jasper eagerly; "the current is strong, and by using the paddles vigorously we shall soon be beyond the reach of these scoundrels!"

"And this poor flower, that first blossomed in the clearings—shall it wither in the forest?" objected his friend, with a poetry which he had unconsciously imbibed by his long association with the Delawares.

"We must all die first," answered the youth, a generous color mounting to his temples; "Mabel and Arrowhead's wife may lie down in the canoes, while we do our duty, like men, on our feet."

"Ay, you are active at the paddle and the oar, Eau-douce, I will allow, but an accursed Mingo is more active at his mischief; the canoes are swift, but a rifle bullet is swifter."

"It is the business of men, engaged as we have been by a confiding father, to run this risk—"

"But it is not their business to overlook prudence."

"Prudence! a man may carry his prudence so far as to forget his courage."

The group was standing on the narrow strand, the Pathfinder leaning on his rifle, the butt of which rested on the gravelly beach, while both his hands clasped the barrel at the height of his own shoulders. As Jasper threw out this severe and unmerited imputation, the deep red of his comrade's face maintained its hue unchanged, though the young man perceived that the fingers grasped the iron of the gun with the tenacity of a vice. Here all betrayal of emotion ceased.

"You are young and hot-headed," returned Pathfinder, with a dignity that impressed his listeners with a keen sense of his moral superiority; "but my life has been passed among dangers of this sort, and my experience and gifts are not to be mastered by the impatience of a boy. As for courage, Jasper, I will not send back an angry and unmeaning word to meet an angry and an unmeaning word; for I know that you are true in your station and according to your

knowledge; but take the advice of one who faced the Mingos when you were a child, and know that their cunning is easier sarcumvented by prudence than outwitted by foolishness."

"I ask your pardon, Pathfinder," said the repentant Jasper, eagerly grasping the hand that the other permitted him to seize; "I ask your pardon, humbly and sincerely. 'Twas a foolish, as well as wicked thing to hint of a man whose heart, in a good cause, is known to be as firm as the rocks on the lake shore."

For the first time the color deepened on the cheek of the Pathfinder, and the solemn dignity which he had assumed, under a purely natural impulse, disappeared in the expression of the earnest simplicity inherent in all his feelings. He met the grasp of his young friend with a squeeze as cordial as if no chord had jarred between them, and a slight sternness that had gathered about his eye disappeared in a look of natural kindness.

"'Tis well, Jasper," he answered, laughing; "I bear no ill-will, nor shall any one on my behalf. My natur' is that of a white man, and that is to bear no malice. It might have been ticklish work to have said half as much to the Serpent here, though he is a Delaware, for color will have its way—"

A touch on his shoulder caused the speaker to cease. Mabel was standing erect in the canoe, her light, but swelling form bent forward in an attitude of graceful earnestness, her finger on her lips, her head averted, her spirited eyes riveted on an opening in the bushes, and one arm extended with a fishing-rod, the end of which had touched the Pathfinder. The latter bowed his head to a level with a look-out near which he had intentionally kept himself, and then whispered to Jasper,—

"The accursed Mingos! Stand to your arms, my men, but lay quiet as the corpses of dead trees!"

Jasper advanced rapidly, but noiselessly, to the canoe, and with a gentle violence induced Mabel to place herself in such an attitude as concealed her entire body, though it would have probably exceeded his means to induce the girl so far to lower her head that she could not keep her gaze fastened on their enemies. He then took his own post near her, with his rifle cocked and poised, in readiness to fire. Arrowhead and Chingachgook crawled to the cover, and lay in wait like snakes, with their arms prepared for



service, while the wife of the former bowed her head between her knees, covered it with her calico robe, and remained passive and immovable. Cap loosened both his pistols in their belt, but seemed quite at a loss what course to pursue. The Pathfinder did not stir. He had originally got a position where he might aim with deadly effect through the leaves, and where he could watch the movements of his enemies; and he was far too steady to be disconcerted at a moment so critical.

It was truly an alarming instant. Just as Mabel touched the shoulder of her guide, three of the Iroquois had appeared in the water, at the bend of the river, within a hundred yards of the cover, and halted to examine the stream below. They were all naked to the waist, armed for an expedition against their foes, and in their war-paint. It was apparent that they were undecided as to the course they ought to pursue in order to find the fugitives. One pointed down the river, a second up the stream, and the third towards the opposite bank. They evidently doubted.

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## CHAPTER IV

It was a breathless moment. The only clue the fugitives possessed to the intentions of their pursuers was in their gestures and the indications which escaped them in the fury of disappointment. That a party had returned already, on their own footsteps, by land, was pretty certain; and all the benefit expected from the artifice of the fire was necessarily lost. But that consideration became of little moment just then; for the party was menaced with an immediate discovery by those who had kept on a level with the river. All the facts presented themselves clearly, and as it might be by intuition, to the mind of Pathfinder, who perceived the necessity of immediate decision and of being in readiness to act in concert. Without making any noise, therefore, he manage to get the two Indians and Jasper near him, when he opened his communications in a whisper.

"We must be ready, we must be ready," he said. "There are but three of the scalping devils, and we are five, four of whom may be set down as manful warriors for such a skirmish. Eau-douce, do you take the fellow that is painted like death; Chingachgook, I give you the chief;



and Arrowhead must keep his eye on the young one. There must be no mistake, for two bullets in the same body would be sinful waste, with one like the Sergeant's daughter in danger. I shall hold myself in reserve against accident, lest a fourth reptile appear, for one of your hands may prove unsteady. By no means fire until I give the word; we must not let the crack of the rifle be heard except in the last resort, since all the rest of the miscreants are still within hearing. Jasper, boy, in case of any movement behind us on the bank, I trust to you to run out the canoe with the Sergeant's daughter, and to pull for the garrison, by God's leave."

The Pathfinder had no sooner given these directions than the near approach of their enemies rendered profound silence necessary. The Iroquois in the river were slowly descending the stream, keeping of necessity near the bushes which overhung the water, while the rustling of leaves and the snapping of twigs soon gave fearful evidence that another party was moving along the bank, at an equally graduated pace, and directly abreast of them. In consequence of the distance between the bushes planted by the fugitives and the true shore, the two parties became visible to each other when opposite that precise point. Both stopped, and a conversation ensued, that may be said to have passed directly over the heads of those who were concealed. Indeed, nothing sheltered the travellers but the branches and leaves of plants, so pliant that they yielded to every current of air, and which a puff of wind a little stronger than common would have blown away. Fortunately the line of sight carried the eyes of the two parties of savages, whether they stood in the water or on the land, above the bushes, and the leaves appeared blended in a way to excite no suspicion. Perhaps the very boldness of the expedient alone prevented an immediate exposure. The conversation which took place was conducted earnestly, but in guarded tones, as if those who spoke wished to defeat the intentions of any listeners. It was in a dialect that both the Indian warriors beneath, as well as the Pathfinder, understood. Even Jasper comprehended a portion of what was said.

"The trail is washed away by the water!" said one from below, who stood so near the artificial cover of the fugitives, that he might have been struck by the salmon-spear that lay in the bottom of Jasper's canoe. "Water has washed it so clear that a Yengeese hound could not follow."

"The pale-faces have left the shore in their canoes," answered the speaker on the bank.

"It cannot be. The rifles of our warriors below are certain."

The Pathfinder gave a significant glance at Jasper, and he clinched his teeth in order to suppress the sound of his own breathing.

"Let my young men look as if their eyes were eagles'," said the eldest warrior among those who were wading in the river. "We have been a whole moon on the war-path, and have found but one scalp. There is a maiden among them, and some of our braves want wives."

Happily these words were lost on Mabel; but Jasper's frown became deeper, and his face fiercely flushed.

The savages now ceased speaking, and the party which was concealed heard the slow and guarded movements of those who were on the bank, as they pushed the bushes aside in their wary progress. It was soon evident that the latter had passed the cover; but the group in the water still remained, scanning the shore with eyes that glared through their war-paint like coals of living fire. After a pause of two or three minutes, these three began also to descend the stream, though it was step by step, as men move who look for an object that has been lost. In this manner they passed the artificial screen, and Pathfinder opened his mouth in that hearty but noiseless laugh that nature and habit had contributed to render a peculiarity of the man. His triumph, however, was premature; for the last of the retiring party, just at this moment casting a look behind him, suddenly stopped; and his fixed attitude and steady gaze at once betrayed the appalling fact that some neglected bush had awakened his suspicions.

It was perhaps fortunate for the concealed that the warrior who manifested these fearful signs of distrust was young, and had still reputation to acquire. He knew the importance of discretion and modesty in one of his years, and most of all did he dread the ridicule and contempt that would certainly follow a false alarm. Without recalling any of his companions, therefore he turned on his own footsteps; and, while the others continued to descend the river, he cautiously approached the bushes, on which his looks were still fastened, as by a charm. Some of the leaves which were exposed to the sun had drooped a little, and this slight departure from the usual natural

laws had caught the quick eyes of the Indian; for so practised and acute do the senses of the savage become, more especially when he is on the war-path, that trifles apparently of the most insignificant sort often prove to be clues to lead him to his object.

The trifling nature of the change which had aroused the suspicion of this youth was an additional motive for not acquainting his companions with his discovery. Should he really detect anything, his glory would be the greater for being unshared; and should he not, he might hope to escape that derision which the young Indian so much dreads. Then there were the dangers of an ambush and a surprise, to which every warrior of the woods is keenly alive, to render his approach slow and cautious. In consequence of the delay that proceeded from these combined causes, the two parties had descended some fifty or sixty yards before the young savage was again near enough to the bushes of the Pathfinder to touch them with his hand.

Notwithstanding their critical situation, the whole party behind the cover had their eyes fastened on the working countenance of the young Iroquois, who was agitated by conflicting feelings. First came the eager hope of obtaining success where some of the most experienced of his tribe had failed, and with a degree of glory that had seldom fallen to the share of one of his years or a brave on his first war-path; then followed doubts, as the drooping leaves seemed to rise again and to revive in the currents of air; and distrust of hidden danger lent its exciting feeling to keep the eloquent features in play. So very slight, however, had been the alteration produced by the heat on the bushes of which the stems were in the water, that when the Iroquois actually laid his hand on the leaves, he fancied that he had been deceived. As no man ever distrusts strongly without using all convenient means of satisfying his doubts, however, the young warrior cautiously pushed aside the branches and advanced a step within the hiding-place, when the forms of the concealed party met his gaze, resembling so many breathless statues. The low exclamation, the slight start, and the glaring eye, were hardly seen and heard, before the arm of Chingachgook was raised, and the tomahawk of the Delaware descended on the shaven head of his foe. The Iroquois raised his hands frantically, bounded backward, and fell into the water, at a spot where the current swept the body

away, the struggling limbs still tossing and writhing in the agony of death. The Delaware made a vigorous but unsuccessful attempt to seize an arm, with the hope of securing the scalp; but the bloodstained waters whirled down the current, carrying with them their quivering burthen.

All this passed in less than a minute, and the events were so sudden and unexpected, that men less accustomed than the Pathfinder and his associates to forest warfare would have been at a loss how to act.

"There is not a moment to lose," said Jasper, tearing aside the bushes, as he spoke earnestly, but in a suppressed voice. "Do as I do, Master Cap if you would save your niece; and you, Mabel, lie at your length in the canoe."

The words were scarcely uttered when, seizing the bow of the light boat, he dragged it along the shore, wading himself, while Cap aided behind, keeping so near the bank as to avoid being seen by the savages below, and striving to gain the turn in the river above him which would effectually conceal the party from the enemy. The Pathfinder's canoe lay nearest to the bank, and was necessarily the last to quit the shore. The Delaware leaped on the narrow strand and plunged into the forest, it being his assigned duty to watch the foe in that quarter, while Arrowhead motioned to his white companion to seize the bow of the boat and to follow Jasper. All this was the work of an instant; but when the Pathfinder reached the current that was sweeping round the turn, he felt a sudden change in the weight he was dragging, and, looking back, he found that both the Tuscarora and his wife had deserted him. The thought of treachery flashed upon his mind, but there was no time to pause, for the wailing shout that rose from the party below proclaimed that the body of the young Iroquois had floated as low as the spot reached by his friends. The report of a rifle followed; and then the guide saw that Jasper, having doubled the bend in the river, was crossing the stream, standing erect in the stern of the canoe, while Cap was seated forward, both propelling the light boat with vigorous strokes of the paddles. A glance, a thought, and with an expedient followed each other quickly in one so trained in the vicissitudes of the frontier warfare. Springing into the stern of his own canoe, he urged it by a vigorous shove into the current, and commenced crossing the stream himself, at a point so much lower than that of his companions as to offer his own person



for a target to the enemy, well knowing that their keen desire to secure a scalp would control all other feelings.

"Keep well up the current, Jasper," shouted the gallant guide, as he swept the water with long, steady vigorous strokes of the paddle; "keep well up the current, and pull for the alder bushes opposite. Preserve the Sargeant's daughter before all things, and leave these Mingo knaves to the Sarpent and me."

Jasper flourished his paddle as a signal of understanding, while shot succeeded shot in quick succession, all now being aimed at the solitary man in the nearest canoe.

"Ay, empty your rifles like simpletons as you are," said the Pathfinder, who had acquired a habit of speaking when alone, from passing so much of his time in the solitude of the forest; "empty your rifles with an unsteady aim, and give me time to put yard upon yard of river between us. I will not revile you like a Delaware or a Molican; for my gifts are a white man's gifts, and not an Indian's; and boasting in battle is no part of a Christian warrior; but I may say here, all alone by myself, that you are little better than so many men from the town shooting at robins in the orchards. That was well meant," throwing back his head, as a rifle bullet cut a lock of hair from his temple; "but the lead that misses by an inch is as useless as the lead that never quits the barrel. Bravely done, Jasper! the Sargeant's sweet child must be saved, even if we go in without our scalps."

By this time the Pathfinder was in the centre of the river, and almost abreast of his enemies, while the other canoe, impelled by the vigorous arms of Cap and Jasper, had nearly gained the opposite shore at the precise spot that had been pointed out to them. The old mariner now played his part manfully; for he was on his proper element, loved his niece sincerely, had a proper regard for his own person, and was not unused to fire, though his experience certainly lay in a very different species of warfare. A few strokes of the paddles were given, and the canoe shot into the bushes, Mabel was hurried to land by Jasper, and for the present all three of the fugitives were safe.

The darkness of the night had lessened, by the dispersion of the clouds, when next they thought it safe to return to the boats, but the overhanging woods rendered the shore so obscure, that the boats floated down the current in a belt



of gloom that effectually secured them from detection. Still, there was necessarily a strong feeling of insecurity in all on board them; and even Jasper, who by this time began to tremble, in behalf of the girl, at every unusual sound that arose from the forest, kept casting uneasy glances around him as he drifted on in company. The paddle was used lightly, and only with exceeding care; for the slightest sound in the breathing stillness of that hour and place might apprise the watchful ears of the Iroquois of their position.

All these accessories added to the impressive grandeur of her situation, and contributed to render the moment much the most exciting which had ever occurred in the brief existence of Mabel Dunham. Spirited, accustomed to self-reliance, and sustained by the pride of considering herself a soldier's daughter, she could hardly be said to be under the influence of fear, yet her heart often beat quicker than common, her fine blue eye lighted with an exhibition of a resolution that was wasted in the darkness, and her quickened feelings came in aid of the real sublimity that belonged to the scene and to the incidents of the night.

"Mabel!" said the suppressed voice of Jasper, as the two canoes floated so near each other that the hand of the young man held them together; "you have no dread? you trust freely to our care and willingness to protect you?"

"I am a soldier's daughter, as you know, Jasper Western, and ought to be ashamed to confess fear."

"Rely on me—on us all. Your uncle, Pathfinder, the Delaware, were the poor fellow here, I myself, will risk everything rather than harm should reach you."

"I believe you, Jasper," returned the girl, her hand unconsciously playing in the water. "I know that my uncle loves me, and will never think of himself until he has first thought of me; and I believe you are all my father's friends, and would willingly assist his child. But I am not so feeble and weak-minded as you may think; for, though only a girl from the towns, and, like most of that class, a little disposed to see danger where there is none, I promise you, Jasper, no foolish fears of mine shall stand in the way of your doing your duty."

"The Sergeant's daughter is right, and she is worthy of being honest Thomas Dunham's child," put in the Pathfinder. "Ah's ine, pretty one! many is the time that your father and I have scouted and marched together on the flanks and rear of the enemy, in nights darker than this,

and that, too, when we did not know but the next moment would lead us into a bloody ambushment. I was at his side when he got the wound in his shoulder; and the honest fellow will tell you, when you meet, the manner in which we contrived to cross the river which lay in our rear, in order to save his scalp."

"He *has* told me," said Mabel, with more energy perhaps than her situation rendered prudent. "I have his letters, in which he has mentioned all that, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart for the service. God will remember it, Pathfinder and there is no gratitude that you can ask of the daughter which she will not cheerfully repay for her father's life."

"Ay, that is the way with all your gentle and pure-hearted creatures. I have seen some of you before, and have heard of others. The Sergeant himself has talked to me of his own young days, and of your mother, and of the manner in which he courted her, and of all the crossings and disappointments, until he succeeded at last."

"My mother did not live long to repay him for what he did to win her," said Mabel, with a trembling lip.

"So he tells me. The honest Sergeant has kept nothing back; for, being so many years my senior, he has looked on me, in our many scoutings together, as a sort of son."

"Perhaps, Pathfinder," observed Jasper, with a huskiness in his voice that defeated the attempt at pleasantry, "he would be glad to have you for one in reality."

"And if he did, Eau-douce, where would be the sin of it? He knows what I am on a trail or a scout, and he has seen me often face to face with the Frenchers. I have sometimes thought, lad, that we all ought to seek for wives; for the man that lives altogether in the woods, and in company with his enemies or his prey, gets to lose some of the feeling of kind in the end. It is not easy to dwell always in the presence of God and not feel the power of His goodness. I have attended church-sarvice in the garrisons, and tried hard, as becomes a true soldier, to join in the prayers; for, though no enlisted sarvant of the king, I fight his battles and sarve his cause, and so I have endeavored to worship garrison-fashion, but never could raise within me the solemn feelings and true affection that I feel when alone with God in the forest. There I seem to stand face to face with my Master; all around me is fresh and beautiful, as it came from His hand; and there

is no nicety or doctrine to chill the feelings. No no; the woods are the true temple after all, for there the thoughts are free to mount higher even than the clouds."

"You speak the truth, Master Pathfinder," said Cap, "and a truth that all who live much in solitude know. What, for instance, is the reason that seafaring men in general are so religious and conscientious in all they do, but the fact that they are often alone with Providence, and have so little to do with the wickedness of the land. Many and many is the time that I have stood my watch under the equator perhaps, or in the Southern Ocean, when the nights are lighted up with the fires of heaven; and that is the time, I can tell you, my hearties, to bring a man to his bearings in the way of his sins. I have rattled down mine again and again under such circumstances, until the shrouds and lanyards of conscience have fairly creaked with the strain. I agree with you, Master Pathfinder, therefore, in saying, if you want a truly religious man, go to the sea, or go into the woods."

While the conversation had been carried on in subdued voices, the canoes were dropping slowly down with the current within the deep shadows of the western shore, the paddles being used merely to preserve the desired direction and proper positions. The strength of the stream varied materially, the water being seemingly still in places, while in other reaches it flowed at a rate exceeding two or even three miles in the hour. On the rifts it even dashed forward with a velocity that was appalling to the unpractised eye. Jasper was of opinion that they might rift down with the current to the mouth of the river in two hours from the time they left the shore, and he and the Pathfinder had agreed on the expediency of suffering the canoes to float of themselves for a time, or at least until they had passed the first dangers of their new movement. The dialogue had been carried on in voices, too, guardedly low; for though the quiet of deep solitude reigned in that vast and nearly boundless forest, nature was speaking with her thousand tongues in the eloquent language of night in a wilderness. The air sighed through ten thousand trees, the water rippled, and at places even roared along the shores; and now and then was heard the creaking of a branch or a trunk, as it rubbed against some object similar to itself, under the vibrations of a nicely balanced body. All living sounds had ceased. Once, it is true, the Pathfinder fancied he

heard the howl of a distant wolf, of which a few prowled through these woods; but it was a transient and doubtful cry, that might possibly have been attributed to the imagination. When he desired his companions, however, to cease talking, his vigilant ear had caught the peculiar sound which is made by the parting of a dried branch of a tree, and which, if his senses did not deceive him, came from the western shore. All who are accustomed to that particular sound will understand how readily the ear receives it, and how easy it is to distinguish the tread which breaks the branch from every other noise of the forest.

"There is the footstep of a man on the bank," said Pathfinder to Jasper, speaking in neither a whisper nor yet in a voice loud enough to be heard at any distance. "Can the accursed Iroquois have crossed the river already, with their arms, and without a boat?"

"It may be the Delaware. He would follow us, of course, down this bank, and would know where to look for us. Let me draw closer into the shore, and reconnoitre."

"Go, boy, but be light with the paddle, and on no account venture ashore on an onsartainty."

"Is this prudent?" demanded Mabel, with an impetuosity that rendered her incautious in modulating her sweet voice.

"Very imprudent, if you speak so loud, fair one. I like your voice, which is soft and pleasing, after listening so long to the tones of men; but it must not be heard too much, or too freely, just now. Your father, the honest Sergeant, will tell you, when you meet him, that silence is a double virtue on a trail. Go, Jasper, and do justice to your own character for prudence."

Ten anxious minutes succeeded the disappearance of the canoe of Jasper, which glided away from that of the Pathfinder so noiselessly, that it had been swallowed up in the gloom before Mabel allowed herself to believe the young man would really venture alone on a service which struck her imagination as singularly dangerous. During this time, the party continued to float with the current, no one speaking, and, it might almost be said, no one breathing, so strong was the general desire to catch the minutest sound that should come from the shore. But the same solemn, we might, indeed, say sublime, quiet reigned as before; the washing of the water, as it piled up against some slight obstruction, and the sighing of the



trees, alone interrupting the slumbers of the forest. At the end of the period mentioned, the snapping of dried branches was again faintly heard, and the Pathfinder fancied that the sound of smothered voices reached him.

"I may be mistaken," he said, "for the thoughts often fancy what the heart wishes; but these were notes like the low tones of the Delaware."

"Do the dead of the savages ever walk?" demanded Cap.

"Ay, and run too, in their happy hunting-grounds, but nowhere else. A red-skin finishes with the 'arth, after the breath quits the body. It is not one of his gifts to linger around his wigwam when his hour has passed."

"I see some object on the water," whispered Mabel, whose eye had not ceased to dwell on the body of gloom, with close intensity, since the disappearance of Jasper.

"It is the canoe," returned the guide, greatly relieved. "All must be safe, or we should have heard from the lad."

In another minute the two canoes, which became visible to those they carried only as they drew near each other, again floated side by side, and the form of Jasper was recognized at the stern of his own boat. The figure of a second man was seated in the bow; and, as the young sailor so wielded his paddle as to bring the face of his companion near the eyes of the Pathfinder and Mabel, they both recognized the person of the Delaware.

"Chingachgook—my brother!" said the guide in the dialect of the other's people, a tremor shaking his voice that betrayed the strength of his feelings. "Chief of the Mohicans! my heart is very glad. Often have we passed through blood and strife together, but I was afraid it was never to be so again."

"Hugh! The Mingos are squaws! Three of their scalps hang at my girdle. They do not know how to strike the Great Serpent of the Delawares. Their hearts have no blood; and their thoughts are on their return path, across the waters of the Great Lake."

"Have you been among them, chief? and what has become of the warrior who was in the river?"

"He has turned into a fish, and lies at the bottom with the eels! Let his brothers bait their hooks for him. Pathfinder, I have counted the enemy, and have touched their rifles."

"Ah, I thought he would be venturesome!" exclaimed the guide in English. "The risky fellow has been in the



midst of them, and has brought us back their whole history. Speak, Chingachgook, and I will make our friends as knowing as ourselves."

The Delaware now related in a low earnest manner the substance of all his discoveries, since he was last seen struggling with his foe in the river. Of the fate of his antagonist he said no more, it not being usual for a warrior to boast in his more direct and useful narratives. As soon as he had conquered in that fearful strife, however, he swam to the eastern shore, landed with caution, and wound his way in amongst the Iroquois, concealed by the darkness, undetected, and, in the main, even unsuspected. Once, indeed, he had been questioned; but answering that he was Arrowhead, no further inquiries were made. By the passing remarks, he soon ascertained that the party was out expressly to intercept Mabel and her uncle, concerning whose rank, however, they had evidently been deceived. He also ascertained enough to justify the suspicion that Arrowhead had betrayed them to their enemies, for some motive that it was not now easy to reach, as he had not yet received the reward of his services.

Pathfinder communicated no more of this intelligence to his companions than he thought might relieve their apprehensions, intimating, at the same time, that now was the moment for exertion, the Iroquois not having yet entirely recovered from the confusion created by their losses.

"We shall find them at the rift, I make no manner of doubt," continued he; "and there it will be our fate to pass them, or to fall into their hands. The distance to the garrison will then be so short, that I have been thinking of a plan of landing with Mabel myself, that I may take her in, by some of the by-ways, and leave the canoes to their chances in the rapids."

"It will never succeed, Pathfinder," eagerly interrupted Jasper. "Mabel is not strong enough to tramp the woods in a night like this. Put her in my skiff, and I will lose my life, or carry her through the rift safely, dark as it is."

"No doubt you will, lad; no one doubts your willingness to do anything to serve the Sergeant's daughter; but it must be the eye of Providence, and not your own, that will take you safely through the Oswego rift in a night like this."

"And who will lead her safely to the garrison if she

land? Is not the night as dark on shore as on the water? or do you think I know less of my calling than you know of yours?"

"Spiritedly said, lad; but if I should loose my way in the dark—and I believe no man can say truly that such a thing ever yet happened to me—but, if I *should* lose my way, no other harm would come of it than to pass a night in the forest; whereas a false turn of the paddle, or a broad sheer of the canoe, would put you and the young woman into the river, out of which it is more than probable the Sergeant's daughter would never come alive."

"I will leave it to Mabel herself; I am certain that she will feel more secure in the canoe."

"I have great confidence in you both," answered the girl; "and have no doubts that either will do all he can to prove to my father how much he values him; but I confess I should not like to quit the canoe, with the certainty we have of there being enemies like those we have seen in the forest."

You are right enough in believing that the Sergeant's daughter will be safer in your canoe than in this," said Pathfinder and though I would gladly keep her near myself, I have her welfare too much at heart not to give her honest advice. Bring your canoe close alongside, Jasper, and I will give you what you must consider as a precious treasure."

"I do so consider it," returned the youth, not loosing a moment in complying with the request; when Mabel passed from one canoe to the other taking her seat on the effects which had hitherto composed its sole cargo.

As soon as the arrangement was made, the canoes separated a short distance, and the paddles were used, though with great care to avoid making any noise. The conversation gradually ceased; and as the dreaded rift was approached, all became impressed with the gravity of the moment. That their enemies would endeavor to reach this point before them was almost certain; and it seemed so little probably any one should attempt to pass it, in the profound obscurity which reigned, that Pathfinder was confident parties were on both sides of the river, in the hope of intercepting them when they might land. He would not have made the proposal he did had he not felt sure of his own ability to convert this very anticipation of success into a means of defeating the plans of the Iroquois.

As the arrangement now stood, however, everything depended on the skill of those who guided the canoes; for should either hit a rock, if not split asunder, it would almost certainly be upset, and then would come not only all the hazards of the river itself, but, for Mabel, the certainty of falling into the hands of her pursuers. The utmost circumspection consequently became necessary, and each one too much engrossed with his own thoughts to feel a disposition to utter more than was called for by the exigencies of the case.

As the canoes stole silently along, the roar of the rift became audible, and it required all the fortitude of Cap to keep his seat, while these boding sounds were approached, amid a darkness which scarcely permitted a view of the outlines of the wooded shore and of the gloomy vault above his head. He retained a vivid impression of the falls, and his imagination was not now idle in swelling the dangers of the rift to a level with those of the headlong descent he had that day made, and even to increase them, under the influence of doubt and uncertainty. In this, however, the old mariner was mistaken, for the Oswego Rift and the Oswego Falls are very different in their characters and violence; the former being no more than a rapid, that glances among shallows and rocks, while the latter really deserved the name it bore, as has been already shown.

Mabel certainly felt distrust and apprehension; but her entire situation was so novel, and her reliance on her guide so great, that she retained a self-command which might not have existed had she clearer perceptions of the truth, or been better acquainted with the helplessness of men when placed in opposition to the power and majesty of Nature.

"Is that the spot you have mentioned?" she said to Jasper, when the roar of the rift first came distinctly on her ears.

"It is; and I beg you to have confidence in me. We are not old acquaintances, Mabel; but we live many days in one, in this wilderness. I think, already, that I have known you years!"

"And I do not feel as if you were a stranger to me, Jasper. I have every reliance on your skill, as well as on your disposition to serve me."

"We shall see, we shall see. Pathfinder is striking the rapids too near the centre of the river; the bed of the water

is closer to the eastern shore; but I cannot make him hear me now. Hold firmly to the canoe, Mabel, and fear nothing."

At the next moment the swift current had sucked them into the rift, and for three or four minutes the awe-struck, rather than the alarmed, girl saw nothing around her but sheets of glancing foam, heard nothing but the roar of waters. Twenty times did the canoe appear about to dash against some curling and bright wave that showed itself even amid that obscurity; and as often did it glide away again unharmed, impelled by the vigorous arm of him who governed its movements. Once, and once only, did Jasper seem to loose command of his frail bark, during which brief space it fairly whirled entirely round; but by a desperate effort he brought it again under control, recovered the lost channel, and was soon rewarded for all his anxiety by finding himself floating quietly in the deep water below the rapids, secure from every danger, and without having taken in enough of the element to serve for a draught.

"All is over, Mabel," the young man cried cheerfully. "The danger is past, and you may now indeed hope to meet your father this very night."

"God be praised! Jasper, we shall owe this great happiness to you."

"The Pathfinder may claim a full share in the merit; but what has become of the other canoe?"

"I see something near us on the water; is it not the boat of our friends?"

A few strokes of the paddle brought Jasper to the side of the object in question: it was the other canoe, empty and bottom upwards. No sooner did the young man ascertain this fact than he began to search for the swimmers, and, to his great joy, Cap was soon discovered drifting down with the current; the old seaman preferring the chances of drowning to those of landing among savages. He was hauled into the canoe, though not without difficulty, and then the search ended; for Jasper was persuaded that the Pathfinder, would wade to the shore, the water being shallow, in preference to abandoning his beloved rifle.

The remainder of the passage was short, though made amid darkness and doubt. After a short pause, a dull roaring sound was heard, which at times resembled the mutterings of distant thunder, and then again brought with it the washing of waters. Jasper announced to his



companions that they now heard the surf of the lake. Low curved spits of land lay before them, into the bay formed by one of which the canoe glided, and then it shot up noiselessly upon a gravelly beach. The transition that followed was so hurried and great, that Mabel scarcely knew what passed. In the course of a few minutes, however, sentinels had been passed, a gate was opened, and the agitated girl found herself in the arms of a parent who was almost a stranger to her.

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## CHAPTER V

THE rest that succeeds fatigue, and which attends a newly awakened sense of security, is generally sweet and deep. Such was the fact with Mabel, who did not rise from her humble pallet—such a bed as a sergeant's daughter might claim in a remote frontier post—until long after the garrison had obeyed the usual summons of the drums, and had assembled at the morning parade. Sergeant Dunham, on whose shoulders fell the task of attending to these ordinary and daily duties, had got through all his morning avocations, and was beginning to think of his breakfast, before his child left her room, and came into the fresh air, equally bewildered, delighted, and grateful, at the novelty and security of her new situation.

At the time of which we are writing, Oswego was one of the extreme frontier posts of the British possessions on this continent. It had not been long occupied, and was garrisoned by a batallion of a regiment which had been originally Scotch, but into which many Americans had been received since its arrival in this country; an innovation that had led the way to Mabel's father filling the humble but responsible situation of the oldest sergeant. A few young officers also, who were natives of the colonies, were to be found in the corps. The fort itself, like most works of that character was better adapted to resist an attack of savages than to withstand a regular siege; but the great difficulty of transporting heavy artillery and other necessaries rendered the occurrence of the latter a probability so remote as scarcely to enter into the estimate of the engineers who had planned the defences. There were bastions of earth and logs, a dry ditch. a stockade, a parade of considerable extent, and



barracks of logs, that answered the double purpose of dwellings and fortifications. A few light field-pieces stood in the area of the fort, ready to be conveyed to any point where they might be wanted, and one or two heavy guns looked out from the summits of the advanced angles, as so many admonitions to the audacious to respect their power.

When Mabel, quitting the convenient, but comparatively retired hut where her father had been permitted to place her, issued into the pure air of the morning, she found herself at the foot of a bastion, which lay invitingly before her, with a promise of giving a *coup d'œil* of all that had been concealed in the darkness of the preceding night. Tripping up the grassy ascent, the light-hearted as well as light-footed girl found herself at once on a point where the sight, at a few varying glances, could take in all the external novelties of her new situation.

To the southward lay the forest, through which she had been journeying so many weary days, which had proved so full of dangers. It was separated from the stockade by a belt of open land, that had been principally cleared of its woods to form the martial constructions around her. This glacia, for such in fact was its military uses, might have covered a hundred acres; but with it every sign of civilization ceased. All beyond was forest; that dense, interminable forest which Mabel could now picture to herself, through her recollections, with its hidden glassy lakes, its dark rolling stream, and its world of nature.

Turning from this view, our heroine felt her cheek fanned by a fresh and grateful breeze, such as she had not experienced since quitting the far distant coast. Here a new scene presented itself: although expected, it was not without a start, and a low exclamation indicative of pleasure, that the eager eyes of the girl drank in its beauties. To the north, and east, and west, in every direction, in short, over one entire half of the novel panorama, lay a field of rolling waters. The element was neither of that glassy green which distinguishes the American waters in general, nor yet of the deep blue of the ocean, the color being of a slightly amber hue, which scarcely affected its limpidity.

Mabel Dunham, thought unsophisticated, like most of her countrywomen of that period, and ingenuous and frank as any warm-hearted and sincere-minded girl well could be, was not altogether without a feeling for the poetry of this beautiful earth of ours. Although she could scarcely be

said to be educated at all, for few of her sex at that day and in this country received much more than the rudiments of plain English instruction, still she had been taught much more than was usual for young women in her own station in life; and, in one sense certainly, she did credit to her teaching. The widow of a field-officer, who formerly belonged to the same regiment as her father, had taken the child in charge at the death of its mother; and under the care of this lady Mabel had acquired some tastes and many ideas which otherwise might always have remained strangers to her. Her situation in the family had been less than of a domestic than of a humble companion, and the results were quite apparent in her attire, her language, her sentiments, and even in her feelings, though neither, perhaps, rose to the level of those which would properly characterize a lady.

"How beautiful!" she exclaimed, unconscious of speaking, as she stood on the solitary bastion, facing the air from the lake, and experiencing the genial influence of its freshness pervading both her body and her mind. "How very beautiful! and yet how singular!"

The words, and the train of her ideas, were interrupted by a touch of a finger on her shoulder, and turning, in the expectation of seeing her father, Mabel found Pathfinder at her side. He was leaning quietly on his long rifle, and laughing in his quiet manner, while, with an outstretched arm, he swept over the whole panorama of land and water.

"Here you have both our domains," said he,—"Jasper's and mine. The lake is for him, and the woods are for me. The lad sometimes boasts of the breadth of his dominions; but I tell him my trees make as broad a plain on the face of this 'arth as all his water. Well, Mabel, you are fit for either; for I do not see that fear of the Mingos or night-marches, can destroy your pretty looks."

"It is a new character for the Pathfinder to appear in, to compliment a silly girl."

"Not silly, Mabel; no, not in the least silly. The Sergeant's daughter would do discredit to her worthy father, were she to do or say anything that could be called silly."

"Then she must take care and not put too much faith in treacherous, flattering words. But, Pathfinder, I rejoice to see you among us again; for, though Jasper did not seem to feel much uneasiness, I was afraid some accident might

have happened to you and your friend on that frightful rift."

"Lord bless your tender little heart, Mabel! but this is the way with all you gentle ones. I must say, on my part, however, that I was right glad to see the lanterns come down to the waterside, which I knew to be a sure sign of *your* safety. We hunters and guides are rude beings; but we have our feelings and our ideas, as well as any general in the army. Both Jasper and I would have died before you should have come to harm—we would."

"I thank you for all you did for me, Pathfinder; from the bottom of my heart, I thank you; and, depend on it, my father shall know it. I have already told him much, but have still a duty to perform on this subject."

"Tush, Mabel! The Sergeant knows what the woods be, an what men—true red men—be, too. There is little need to tell him anything about it. Well, now you have met your father, do you find the honest old soldier the sort of person you expected to find?"

"He is my own dear father, and received me as a soldier and a father should receive a child. Have you known him long, Pathfinder?"

"That is as people count time. I was just twelve when the Sergeant took me on my first scouting, and that is now more than twenty years ago. We had a tramping time of it; and, as it was before your day, you would have had no father, had not the rifle been one of my natural gifts."

"Explain yourself."

"It is too simple for many words. We were ambushed, and the Sergeant got a bad hurt, and would have lost his scalp, but for a sort of inbred turn I took to the weapon. We brought him off, however, and a handsomer head of hair, for his time of life, is not to be found in the regiment than the Sergeant carries about with him this blessed day."

"You saved my father's life, Pathfinder!" exclaimed Mabel, unconsciously, though warmly, taking one of the hard, sinewy hands into both her own. "God bless you for this, too, among your other good acts!"

"Nay, I did not say that much, though I believe I did save his scalp. A man might live without a scalp, and so I cannot say I saved his life. Jasper may say that much consarning you; for without his eye and arm the canoe would never have passed the rift in safety on a night like the last. The gifts of the lad are for the water, while

mine are for the hunt and the trail. He is yonder, in the cove there, looking after the canoes, and keeping his eye on his beloved little craft. To my eye, there is no likelier youth in these parts than Jasper Western."

For the first time since she had left her room, Mabel now turned her eyes beneath her, and got a view of what might be called the foreground of the remarkable picture she had been studying with so much pleasure. The Oswego threw its dark waters into the lake, between banks of some height; that on its eastern side being bolder and projecting farther north than that on its western. The fort was on the latter, and immediately beneath it were a few huts of logs, which, as they could not interfere with the defence of the place, had been erected along the strand for the purpose of receiving and containing such stores as were landed, or were intended to be embarked, in the communications between the different ports on the shores of Ontario. Two low, curved, gravelly points had been formed with surprising regularity by the counteracting forces of the northerly winds and the swift current, and, inclining from the storms of the lake, formed two coves within the river: that on the western side was the most deeply indented; and, as it also had the most water, it formed a sort of picturesque little port for the post. It was along the narrow strand that lay between the low height of the fort and the water of this cove, that the rude buildings just mentioned had been erected.

A week passed in the usual routine of a garrison. Mabel was becoming used to a situation that, at first, she had found not only novel, but a little irksome; and the officers and men in their turn, gradually familiarized to the presence of a young and blooming girl, whose attire and carriage had that air of modest gentility about them which she had obtained in the family of her patroness, annoyed her less by their ill-concealed admiration, while they gratified her by the respect which, she was fain to think, they paid her on account of her father; but which, in truth, was more to be attributed to her own modest but spirited deportment, than to any deference for the worthy Sergeant.

Acquaintances made in a forest, or in any circumstances of unusual excitement, soon attain their limits. Mabel found one week's residence at Oswego sufficient to determine her as to those with whom she might be intimate and those whom she ought to avoid. The sort of neutral position



occupied by her father, who was not an officer, while he was so much more than a common soldier, by keeping her aloof from the two great classes of military life, lessened the number of those whom she was compelled to know, and made the duty of decision comparatively easy. Still she soon discovered that there were a few, even among those that could aspire to a seat at the Commandant's table, who were disposed to overlook the halbert for the novelty of a well-turned figure and of a pretty, winning face; and by the end of the first two or three days she had admirers even among the gentlemen. The Quartermaster, in particular, a middle-aged soldier, who had more than once tried the blessings of matrimony already, but was now a widower, was evidently disposed to increase his intimacy with the Sergeant, though their duties often brought them together; and the youngsters among his messmates did not fail to note that this man of method, who was a Scotsman of the name of Muir, was much more frequent in his visits to the quarters of his subordinate than had formerly been his wont. A laugh, or a joke, in honor of the "Sergeant's daughter," however, limited their strictures; though "Mabel Dunham" was soon a toast that even the ensign, or the lieutenant, did not disdain to give.

At the end of the week, Duncan of Lundie sent for Sergeant Dunham, after evening roll-call, on business of a nature that, it was understood, required a personal conference. The old veteran dwelt in a movable hut, which, being placed on trucks, he could order to be wheeled about at pleasure, sometimes living in one part of the area within the fort, and sometimes in another. On the present occasion, he had made a halt near the centre; and there he was found by his subordinate, who was admitted to his presence without any delay or dancing attendance in an ante-chamber. In point of fact, there was very little difference in the quality of the accommodations allowed to the officers and those allowed to the men, the former being merely granted the most room.

"Walk in, Sergeant, walk in, my good friend," said old Lundie heartily, as his inferior stood in a respectful attitude at the door of a sort of library and bedroom into which he had been ushered;—"walk in, and take a seat on that stool. I have sent for you, man, to discuss anything but rosters and pay-rolls this evening. It is now many years since we have been comrades, and 'auld lang syne'



should count for something, even between a major and his orderly, a Scot and a Yankee. Sit ye down, man, and just put yourself at your ease. It has been a fine day, Sergeant."

"It has indeed, Major Duncan," returned the other, who, though he complied so far as to take the seat, was much too practised not to understand the degree of respect it was necessary to maintain in his manner; "a very fine day, sir, it has been, and we may look for more of them at this season."

"I hope so with all my heart. The crops look well as it is, man, and you'll be finding that the 55th make almost as good farmers as soldiers. I never saw better potatoes in Scotland than we are likely to have in that new patch of ours."

"They promise a good yield, Major Duncan; and, in that light, a more comfortable winter than the last."

"Life is progressive, Sergeant, in its comforts as well as in its need of them. We grow old, and I begin to think it time to retire and settle in life. I feel that my working days are nearly over."

"The king, God bless him! sir, has much good service in your honor yet."

"It may be so, Sergeant Dunham, especially if he should happen to have a spare lieutenant-colonelcy left."

"The 55th will be honored the day that commission is given to Duncan of Lundie, sir."

"And Duncan of Lundie will be honored the day he receives it. But, Sergeant, if you have never had a lieutenant-colonelcy, you have had a good wife, and that is the next thing to rank in making a man happy."

"I have been married, Major Duncan; but it is now a long time since I have had no drawback on the love I bear his majesty and my duty."

"What, man! not even the love you bear that active little round-limbed, rosy-cheeked daughter that I have seen in the fort these last few days! Out upon you, Sergeant! old fellow as I am, I could almost love that little lassie myself, and send the lieutenant-colonelcy to the devil."

"We all know where Major Duncan's heart is, and that is in Scotland, where a beautiful lady is ready and willing to make him happy, as soon as his own sense of duty shall permit."

"Ay, hope is ever a far-off thing, Sergeant," returned the superior, a shade of melancholy passing over his hard

Scottish features as he spoke; "and bonnie Scotland is a far-off country. Well, if we have no heather and oatmeal in this region, we have venison for the killing of it and salmon as plenty as at Berwick-upon-Tweed. Is it true, Sergeant, that the men complain of having been over-venisoned and over-pigeoned of late?"

"Not for some weeks, Major Duncan, for neither deer nor birds are so plenty at this season as they have been. They begin to throw their remarks about concerning the salmon, but I trust we shall get through the summer without any serious disturbance on the score of food. The Scotch in the battalion do, indeed, talk more than is prudent of their want of oatmeal, grumbling occasionally of our wheaten bread."

"Ah, that is human nature, Sergeant! pure, unadulterated Scotch human nature. A cake, man, to say the truth, is an agreeable morsel, and I often see the time when I pine for a bite myself."

"If the feeling gets to be troublesome, Major Duncan,—in the men, I mean, sir, for I would not think of saying so disrespectful a thing to your honor,—but if the men ever pine seriously for their natural food, I would humbly recommend that some oatmeal be imported, or prepared in this country for them, and I think we shall hear no more of it. A very little would answer for a cure, sir."

"You are a wag, Sergeant; but hang me if I am sure you are not right. There may be sweeter things in this world, after all, than oatmeal. You have a sweet daughter, Dunham, for one."

"The girl is like her mother, Major Duncan, and will pass inspection," said the Sergeant proudly. "Neither was brought up on anything better than good American flour. The girl will pass inspection, sir."

"That would she, I'll answer it. Well, I may as well come to the point at once, man, and bring up my reserve into the front of the battle. Here is Davy Muir, the quartermaster, disposed to make your daughter his wife, and he has just got me to open the matter to you, being fearful of compromising his own dignity; and I may as well add that half the youngsters in the fort toast her, and talk of her from morning till night."

"She is much honored, sir," returned the father stiffly; "but I trust the gentlemen will find something more worthy

of them to talk about ere long. I hope to see her the wife of an honest man before many weeks, sir."

"Yes, Davy is an honest man, and that is more than can be said for all in the quartermaster's department, I'm thinking, Sergeant," returned Lundie, with a slight smile. "Well, then may I tell the Cupid-stricken youth that the matter is as good as settled?"

"I thank your honor; but Mabel is betrothed to another."

"The devil she is! That will produce a stir in the fort; though I'm not sorry to hear it either, for, to be frank with you, Sergeant, I'm no great admirer of unequal matches."

"I think with your honor, and have no desire to see my daughter an officer's lady. If she can get as high as her mother was before her, it ought to satisfy any reasonable woman."

"And may I ask, Sergeant, who is the lucky man that you intend to call son-in-law?"

"The Pathfinder, your honor."

"Pathfinder!"

"The same, Major Duncan; and in naming him to you, I give you his whole history. No one is better known on this frontier than my honest, brave, true-hearted friend."

"All that is true enough; but is he, after all, the sort of person to make a girl of twenty happy?"

"Why not, your honor? The man is at the head of his calling. There is no other guide or scout connected with the army who has half the reputation of Pathfinder, or who deserves to have it half as well."

"Very true, Sergeant; but is the reputation of a scout exactly the sort of renown to captivate a girl's fancy?"

"Talking of girls' fancies, sir, is in my humble opinion much like talking of a recruit's judgment. If we were to take the movements of the awkward squad, sir, as a guide, we should never form a decent line in battalion, Major Duncan."

"But your daughter has nothing awkward about her; for a genteeler girl of her class could not be found in old Albion itself. Is she of your way of thinking in this matter?—though I suppose she must be, as you say she is betrothed."

"We have not yet conversed on the subject, your honor; but I consider her mind as good as made up, from several little circumstances which might be named."

"And what are these circumstances, Sergeant?" asked the Major, who began to take more interest than he had at first felt on the subject. "I confess a little curiosity to know something about a woman's mind, being, as you know, a bachelor myself."

"Why, your honor, when I speak of the Pathfinder to the girl, she always looks me full in the face; chimes in with everything I say in his favor, and has a frank open way with her, which says as much as if she half considered him already as a husband."

"Hum! and these signs, you think, Dunham, are faithful tokens of your daughter's feelings?"

"I do, your honor, for they strike me as natural. When I find a man, sir, who looks me full in the face, while he praises an officer,—for, begging your honor's pardon, the men will sometimes pass their strictures on their betters,—and when I find a man looking me in the eyes as he praises his captain, I always set it down that the fellow is honest, and means what he says."

"Is there not some material difference in the age of the intended bridegroom and that of his pretty bride, Sergeant?"

"You are quite right, sir; Pathfinder is well advanced towards forty, and Mabel has every prospect of happiness that a young woman can derive from the certainty of possessing an experienced husband. I was quite forty myself, your honor, when I married her mother."

"But will your daughter be as likely to admire a green hunting-shirt, such as that our worthy guide wears, with a fox-skin cap, as the smart uniform of the 55th?"

"Perhaps not, sir; and therefore she will have the merit of self-denial, which always makes a young woman wiser and better."

"And are you not afraid that she may be left a widow while still a young woman? what between wild beasts, and wilder savages, Pathfinder may be said to carry his life in his hand."

"'Every bullet has its billet,' Lundie," for so the Major was fond of being called in his moments of condescension, and when not engaged in military affairs; "and no man in the 55th can call himself beyond or above the chances of sudden death. In that particular, Mabel would gain nothing by a change. Besides, sir, if I may speak freely on such a



subject, I much doubt if ever Pathfinder dies in battle, or by any of the sudden chances of the wilderness."

"And why so, Sergeant?" asked the Major. "He is a soldier, so far as danger is concerned, and one that is much more than usually exposed; and, being free of his person, why should he expect to escape when others do not?"

"I do not believe, your honor, that the Pathfinder considers his own chances better than any one's else, but the man will never die by a bullet. I have seen him so often handling his rifle with as much composure as if it were a shepherd's crook, in the midst of the heaviest showers of bullets, and under so many extraordinary circumstances, that I do not think Providence means he should ever fall in that manner. And yet, if there be a man in his Majesty's dominions who really deserves such a death, it is Pathfinder."

"We never know, Sergeant," returned Lundie, with a countenance grave with thought; "and the less we say about it, perhaps, the better. But will your daughter—Mabel, I think, you call her—will Mabel be as willing to accept one who, after all, is a mere hanger-on of the army, as to take one from the service itself? There is no hope of promotion for the guide, Sergeant."

"He is at the head of his corps already, your honor. In short, Mabel has made up her mind on this subject; and, as your honor has had the condescension to speak to me about Mr. Muir, I trust you will be kind enough to say that the girl is as good as billeted for life."

"Well well, this is your own matter, and, now—Sergeant Dunham!"

"Your honor," said the other, rising and giving the customary salute.

"You have been told it is my intention to send you down among the Thousand Islands for the next month. All the old subalterns have had their tours of duty in that quarter—all that I like to trust at least; and it has at length come to your turn. Lieutenant Muir, it is true, claims his right; but, being quartermaster, I do not like to break up well-established arrangements. Are the men drafted?"

"Everything is ready, your honor. The draft is made, and I understood that the canoe which got in last night brought a message to say that the party already below is looking out for the relief."

"It did; and you must sail the day after to-morrow, if



not to-morrow night. It will be wise, perhaps, to sail in the dark."

"So Jasper thinks, Major Duncan; and I know no one more to be depended on in such an affair than young Jasper Western."

"Young Jasper Eau-douce!" said Lundie, a slight smile gathering around his usually stern mouth. "Will that lad be of your party, Sergeant?"

"Your honor will remember that the *Scud* never quits port without him."

"True; but all general rules have their exceptions. Have I not seen a seafaring person about the fort within the last few days?"

"No doubt, your honor; it is Master Cap, a brother-in-law of mine, who brought my daughter from below."

"Why not put him in the *Scud* for this cruise, Sergeant, and leave Jasper behind? Your brother-in-law would like the variety of a fresh-water cruise, and you would enjoy more of his company."

"I intended to ask your honor's permission to take him along; but he must go as a volunteer. Jasper is too brave a lad to be turned out of his command without a reason, Major Duncan; and I'm afraid brother Cap despises fresh water too much to do duty on it."

"Quite right, Sergeant, and I leave all this to your own discretion. Eau-douce must retain his command, on second thoughts. You intend that Pathfinder shall also be of the party?"

"If your honor approves of it. There will be service for both guides, the Indian as well as the white man."

"I think you are right. Well, Sergeant, I wish you good luck in the enterprise; and remember the post is to be destroyed and abandoned when your command is withdrawn. It will have done its work by that time, or we shall have failed entirely, and it is too ticklish a position to be maintained unnecessarily. You can retire."

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## CHAPTER VI

It was now September, a month in which the strong gales of the coast often force themselves across the country as far as the great lakes, where the inland sailor feels that genial

influence which characterizes the winds of the ocean invigorating his frame, cheering his spirits, and arousing his moral force.

The social episodes and occurrences of the fort together with privations and dangers, had revealed to one another the dispositions and characters of the mixed garrison, Mabel Dunham, being the only single young woman of higher breeding and refinement, was courted by many diverse characters in the fort, from Pathfinder and Jasper, to the pestiferous Scotchman Lieutenant Davy Muir. But to all of them she was the same except that to Pathfinder she gave her silver brooch in token of her appreciation and gratitude.

One afternoon Mabel Dunham was on the bastion that overlooked the river and the lake, seemingly in deep thought. The evening was calm and soft, and the question had arisen whether the party for the Thousand Islands would be able to get out that night or not, on account of the total absence of wind. The stores, arms and ammunition were already shipped, and even Mabel's effects were on board; but the small draft of men that was to go was still ashore, there being no apparent prospect of the cutter's getting under way. Jasper had warped the *Scud* out of the cove, and so far up the stream as to enable him to pass through the outlet of the river whenever he chose; but there he still lay, riding at single anchor. The drafted men were lounging about the shore of the cove, undecided whether or not to pull off.

The sports of the morning had left a quiet in the garrison which was in harmony with the whole of the beautiful scene, and Mabel felt its influence on her feelings, though probably too little accustomed to speculate on such sensations to be aware of the cause. Everything near appeared lovely and soothing, while the solemn grandeur of the silent forest and placid expanse of the lake lent a sublimity that other scenes might have wanted. For the first time, Mabel felt the hold that the towns and civilization had gained on her habits sensibly weakened; and the warm-hearted girl began to think that a life passed amid objects such as those around her might be happy. How far the experience of the last days came in aid of the calm and holy eventide, and contributed towards producing that young conviction, may be suspected, rather than affirmed, in this early portion of our legend.

"A charming sunset, Mabel!" said the hearty voice of

her uncle, so close to the ear of our heroine as to cause her to start,—“a charming sunset, girl, for a fresh-water concern, though we should think but little of it at sea.”

“And is not nature the same on shore or at sea—on a lake like this or on the ocean? Does not the sun shine on all alike, dear uncle; and can we not feel gratitude for the blessings of Providence as strongly on this remote frontier as in our own Manhattan?”

“The girl has fallen in with some of her mother’s books. Is not nature the same, indeed! Now, Mabel, do you imagine that the nature of a soldier is the same as that of a seafaring man? You’ve relations in both callings, and ought to be able to answer.”

“But, uncle, I mean human nature.”

“So do I, girl; the human nature of a seaman, and the human nature of one of these fellows of the 55th, not even excepting your own father. Here have they had a shooting-match—target-firing I should call it—this day, and what a different thing has it been from a target-firing afloat! There we should have sprung our broadside, sported with round shot, at an object half a mile off, at the very nearest; and the potatoes, if there happened to be any on board, as very likely would not have been the case, would have been left in the cook’s coppers. It may be an honorable calling, that of a soldier, Mabel; but an experienced hand sees many follies and weaknesses in one of these forts. As for that bit of a lake, you know my opinion of it already, and I wish to disparage nothing. No real seafarer disparages anything; but, d— me, if I regard this here Ontario, as they call it, as more than so much water in a ship’s scuttle-butt. Now, look you here, Mabel, if you wish to understand the difference between the ocean and a lake, I can make you comprehend it with a single look: this is what one may call a calm, seeing that there is no wind; though, to own the truth, I do not think the calms are as calm as them we get outside——”

“Uncle, there is not a breath of air. I do not think it possible for the leaves to be more immovable still than those of the entire forest are at this very moment.”

“All d—d poetry! Lake Ontario is no more the Atlantic than a Powles Hook periagua is a first-rate. That Jasper, notwithstanding, is a fine lad, and wants instruction only to make a man of him.”

“Do you think him ignorant, uncle?” answered Mabel,

prettily adjusting her hair, in order to do which she was obliged, or fancied she was obliged, to turn away her face. "To me Jasper Eau-douce appears to know more than most of the young men of his class. He has read but little, for books are not plenty in this part of the world; but he has thought much, as least so it seems to me, for one so young."

"He is ignorant, as all must be who navigate an inland water like this. No, no, Mabel; we both owe something to Jasper and the Pathfinder, and I have been thinking how I can best serve them, for I hold ingratitude to be the vice of a hog; for treat the animal to your own dinner, and he would eat you for the desert."

"Very true, dear uncle; we ought indeed to 'do all we can to express our proper sense of the services of both these brave men."

"Spoken like your mother's daughter, girl, and in a way to do credit to the Cap family. Now, I've hit upon a traverse that will just suit all parties; and, as soon as we get back from this little expedition down the lake among them there Thousand Islands, and I am ready to return, it is my intention to propose it."

"Dearest uncle! this is so considerate in you, and will be so just! May I ask what your intentions are?"

"I see no reason for keeping them a secret from you, Mabel, though nothing need be said to your father about them; for the Sergeant has his prejudices, and might throw difficulties in the way. Neither Jasper nor his friend Pathfinder can ever make anything hereabouts, and I propose to take them both with me down to the coast, and get them fairly afloat. Jasper would find his sea-legs in a fortnight, and a twelvemonth's v'y'ge would make him a man. Although Pathfinder might take more time, or never get to be rated able, yet one could make something of him too, particularly as a look-out, for he has unusually good eyes."

"Uncle, do you think either would consent to this?" said Mabel, smiling.

"Do I suppose them simpletons? what rational being would neglect his own advancement? Let Jasper alone to push his way, and the lad may yet die the master of some square-rigged craft."

"And would he be any happier for it, dear uncle? How



much better is it to be the master of a square-rigged craft than to be master of a round-rigged craft?"

"Pooh, pooh, Magnet! you are just fit to read lectures about ships before some hysterical society; you don't know what you are talking about; leave these things to me, and they'll be properly managed. Ah! here is the Pathfinder himself, and I may just as well drop him a hint of my benevolent intentions as regards himself. Hope is a great encourager of our exertions."

Cap nodded his head, and then ceased to speak, while the hunter approached, not with his usual frank and easy manner, but in a way to show that he was slightly embarrassed, if not distrustful of his reception.

"Uncle and niece make a family party," said Pathfinder, when near the two, "and a stranger may not prove a welcome companion?"

"You are no stranger, Master Pathfinder," returned Cap, "and no one can be more welcome than yourself. We were talking of you but a moment ago, and when friends speak of an absent man, he can guess what they have said."

"I ask no secrets. Every man has his enemies, and I have mine, though I count neither you, Master Cap, nor pretty Mabel here among the number. As for the Mingos, I will say nothing, though they have no just cause to hate me."

"That I'll answer for, Pathfinder! for you strike my fancy as being well-disposed and upright. There is a method, however, of getting away from the enmity of even these Mingos; and if you choose to take it, no one will more willingly point it out than myself, without a charge for my advice either."

"I wish no enemies, Saltwater," for so the Pathfinder had begun to call Cap, having, insensibly to himself, adopted the term, by translating the name given him by the Indians in and about the fort,—"I wish no enemies. I'm as ready to bury the hatchet with the Mingos as with the French, though you know that it depends on One greater than either of us so to turn the heart as to leave a man without enemies."

"By lifting your anchor, and accompanying me down to the coast, friend Pathfinder, when we get back from this short cruise on which we are bound, you will find yourself



beyond the sound of the war-hoop, and safe enough from any Indian bullet."

"And what should I do on the salt water? Hunt in your towns? Follow the trails of people going and coming from market, and ambush dogs and poultry? You are no friend of my happiness, Master Cap, if you would lead me out of the shades of the woods to put me in the sun of the clearings."

"I did not propose to leave you in the settlements, Pathfinder, but to carry you out to sea, where a man can only be said to breathe freely. Mabel will tell you that such was my intention, before a word was said on the subject."

"And what does Mabel think would come of such a change? She knows that a man has his gifts, and that it is as useless to pretend to others as to withstand them that come from Providence. I am a hunter, and a scout, or a guide, Saltwater, and it is not in me to fly so much in the face of Heaven as to try to become anything else. Am I right, Mabel, or are you so much a woman as to wish to see a natur' altered?"

"I would wish to see no change in you, Pathfinder," Mabel answered, with a cordial sincerity and frankness that went directly to the hunter's heart; "and much as my uncle admires the sea, and great as is all the good that he thinks may come of it, I could not wish to see the best and noblest hunter of the woods transformed into an admiral. Remain what you are, my brave friend, and you need fear nothing short of the anger of God."

"Do you hear this, Saltwater? do you hear what the Sergeant's daughter is saying, and she is much too upright, and fair-minded, and pretty, not to think what she says. So long as she is satisfied with me as I am, I shall not fly in the face of the gifts of Providence, by striving to become anything else. I may seem useless here in a garrison; but when we get down among the Thousand Islands, there may be an opportunity to prove that a sure rifle is sometimes a Godsend."

"You are then to be of our party? said Mabel, smiling so frankly and so sweetly on the guide that he would have followed her to the end of the earth. "I shall be the only female, with the exception of one soldier's wife, and shall feel none the less secure, Pathfinder, because you will be among our protectors."

"The Sergeant would do that, Mabel, though you were not of his kin. No one will overlook you. I should think your uncle here would like an expedition of this sort, where we shall go with sails, and have a look at an inland sea?"

"Your inland sea is no great matter, Master Pathfinder, and I expect nothing from it. I confess, however, I should like to know the object of the cruise; for one does not wish to be idle, and my brother-in-law, the Sergeant, is as close-mouthed as a freemason. Do you know, Mabel, what all this means?"

"Not in the least, uncle. I dare not ask my father any questions about his duty, for he thinks it is not a woman's business; and all I can say is, that we are to sail as soon as the wind will permit, and that we are to be absent a month."

"Perhaps Master Pathfinder can give me a useful hint; for a v'y'ge without an object is never pleasant to an old sailor."

"There is no great secret, Saltwater, concerning our port and object, though it is forbidden to talk much about either in the garrison. I am no soldier, however, and can use my tongue as I please, though as little given as another to idle conversation, I hope; still, as we sail so soon, and you are both to be of the party, you may as well be told where you are to be carried. You know that there are such things as the Thousand Islands, I suppose, Master Cap?"

"Ay, what are so called hereaway, though I take it for granted that they are not real islands, such as we fall in with on the ocean; and that the thousand means some such matter as two or three."

"My eyes are good, and yet have I often been foiled in trying to count them very islands."

"Ay, ay, I've known people who couldn't count beyond a certain number. Your real land-birds never know their own roosts, even in a land-fall at sea. How many times have I seen the beach, and houses, and churches, when the passengers have not been able to see anything but water! I have no idea that a man can get fairly out of sight of land on fresh water. The thing appears to me to be irrational and impossible."

"You don't know the lakes, Master Cap, or you would not say that. Before we get to the Thousand Islands, you

will have other notions of what natur' has done in this wilderness."

"I have my doubts whether you have such a thing as a real island in all this region."

"We'll show you hundreds of them; not exactly a thousand, perhaps, but so many that eye cannot see them all, nor tongue count them."

"I'll engage, when the truth comes to be known, they'll turn out to be nothing but peninsulas, or promontories, or continents; though these are matters, I daresay, of which you know little or nothing. But, islands or no islands, what is the object of the cruise, Master Pathfinder?"

"There can be no harm in giving you some idea of what we are going to do. Being so old a sailor, Master Cap, you've heard, no doubt, of such a port as Frontenac?"

"Who hasn't? I will not say I've ever been inside the harbor, but I've frequently been off the place."

Lundie, as they call him, he who commands this garrison, sent a party down to take a station among the islands, to cut off some of the French boats; and this expedition of ours will be the second relief. As yet they've not done much, though two bateaux loaded with Indian goods have been taken; but a runner came in last week, and brought such tidings that the Major is about to make a last effort to circumvent the knaves. Jasper knows the way, and we shall be in good hands, for the Sergeant is prudent, and of the first quality at an ambushment; yes, he is both prudent and alert."

"Is this all?" said Cap contemptuously; "by the preparations and equipments, I had thought there was a forced trade in the wind, and that an honest penny might be turned by taking an adventure. I suppose there are no shares in your fresh-water prize-money?"

"Anan?"

"I take it for granted the king gets all in these soldiering parties, and ambushments, as you call them."

"I know nothing about that, Master Cap. I take my share of the lead and powder if any falls into our hands, and say nothing to the king about it. If any one fares better, it is not I; though it is time I did begin to think of a house and furniture and a home."

Although the Pathfinder did not dare to look at Mabel while he made this direct allusion to his change of life, he would have given the world to know whether she was lis-

tening, and what was the expression of her countenance. Mabel little suspected the nature of the illusion, however; and her countenance was perfectly unembarrassed as she turned her eyes towards the river, where the appearance of some movement on board the *Scud* began to be visible.

"Jasper is bringing the cutter out," observed the guide, whose look was drawn in the same direction by the fall of some heavy article on the deck. "The lad sees the signs of wind, no doubt, and wishes to be ready for it."

"Ay, now we shall have an opportunity of learning seamanship," returned Cap, with a sneer. "There is a nicety in getting a craft under her canvas that shows the thoroughbred mariner as much as anything else. It's like a soldier buttoning his coat, and one can see whether he begins at the top or the bottom."

"I will not say that Jasper is equal to your seafarers below," observed Pathfinder, across whose upright mind an unworthy feeling of envy or of jealousy never passed; "but he is a bold boy, and manages his cutter as skillfully as any man can desire, on this lake at least. You didn't find him backwards at the Oswego Falls, Master Cap, where fresh water contrives to tumble down hill with little difficulty."

"She seems very beautiful to me, uncle," said Mabel, whose gaze had not been averted from the cutter for a single moment while it had been changing its position; "I daresay you can find faults in her appearance, and in the way she is managed; but to my ignorance both are perfect."

Ay, ay; she drops down with a current well enough, girl, and so would a chip. But when you come to niceties, an old tar like myself has no need of spectacles to find fault."

"Jasper is a handy lad," suddenly observed Sergeant Dunham at his brother-in-law's elbow; "and we place great reliance on his skill in our expeditions. But come, one and all, we have but half an hour more of daylight to embark in, and the boats will be ready for us by the time we are ready for them."

On this intimation the whole party separated, each to find those trifles which had not been shipped already. A few taps of the drum gave the necessary signal to the soldiers, and in a minute all were in motion.



## CHAPTER VII

THE embarkation of so small a party was a matter of no great delay or embarrassment. The whole force confided to the care of Sergeant Dunham consisted of but ten privates and two non-commissioned officers, though it was soon positively known that Mr. Muir was to accompany the expedition. The Quartermaster, however, went as a volunteer, while some duty connected with his own department, as had been arranged between him and his commander, was the avowed object. To these must be added the Pathfinder and Cap, with Jasper and his subordinates, one of whom was a boy. The party, consequently, consisted of less than twenty men, and a lad of fourteen. Mabel and the wife of a common soldier were the only females.

Sergeant Dunham carried off his command in a large bateau, and then returned for his final orders, and to see that his brother-in-law and daughter were properly attended to. Having pointed out to Cap the boat that he and Mabel were to use, he ascended the hill to seek his last interview with Lundie.

It was nearly dark when Mabel found herself in the boat that was to carry her off to the cutter. So very smooth was the surface of the lake, that it was not found necessary to bring the bateaux into the river to receive their freights; but the beach outside being totally without surf, and the water as tranquil as that of a pond, everybody embarked there. When the boat left the land, Mabel would not have known that she was afloat on so broad a sheet of water by any movement which is usual to such circumstances. The oars had barely time to give a dozen strokes, when the boat lay at the cutter's side.

Jasper was in readiness to receive his passengers; and, as the deck of the *Scud* was about two or three feet above the water, no difficulty was experienced in getting on board of her. As soon as this was effected, the young man pointed out to Mabel and her companion the accommodations prepared for their reception.

Darkness was now beginning to render objects on shore indistinct, the whole of the land forming one shapeless black outline of even forest summits, to be distinguished from the impending heavens only by the greater light of the sky. The stars, however, soon began to appear in the

latter, one after another, in their usual mild placid lustre, bringing with them that sense of quiet which ordinarily accompanies night. There was something soothing, as well as exciting, in such a scene; and Mabel, who was seated on the quarter-deck, sensibly felt both influences. The Pathfinder was standing near her, leaning, as usual, on his long rifle, and she fancied that, through the growing darkness of the hour, she could trace even stronger lines of thought than usual in his rugged countenance.

"To you, Pathfinder, expeditions like this can be no great novelty," said she; "though I am surprised to find how silent and thoughtful the men appear to be."

"We learn this by making war ag'in Indians. Your militia are great talkers and little doers in general; but the soldier who has often met the Mingos learns to know the value of a prudent tongue. A silent army, in the woods, is doubly strong; and a noisy one, doubly weak. If tongues made soldiers, the women of a camp would generally carry the day."

"But we are neither an army, nor in the woods. There can be no danger of Mingos in the *Scud*."

"No one is safe from a Mingo, who does not understand his very natur'; and even then he must act up to his own knowledge, and that closely. Ask Jasper how he got command of this very cutter."

"And how *did* he get command?" inquired Mabel, with an earnestness and interest that quite delighted her simple-minded and true-hearted companion, who was never better pleased than when he had an opportunity of saying aught in favor of a friend. "It is honorable to him that he has reached this station while yet so young."

"That is it; but he deserved it all, and more. A frigate wouldn't have been too much to pay for so much spirit and coolness, had there been such a thing on Ontario, as there is not, hows'ever, or likely to be."

"But Jasper—you have not yet told me how he got the command of the schooner."

"It is a long story, Mabel, and one your father, the Sergeant, can tell much better than I; for he was present, while I was off on a distant scouting. Jasper is not good at a story, I will own that; I have heard him questioned about this affair, and he never made a good tale of it, although everybody knows it was a good thing. The *Scud* had near fallen into the hands of the French and the

Mingos, when Jasper saved her, in a way which none but a quick-witted mind and a bold heart would have attempted. The Sergeant will tell the tale better than I can, and I wish you to question him some day, when nothing better offers."

Mabel determined to ask her father to repeat the incidents of the affair that very night; for it struck her young fancy that nothing better could well offer than to listen to the praises of one who was a bad historian of his own exploits.

In the meanwhile, an interview on the bastion took place between Lundie and the Sergeant.

"Have the men's knapsacks been examined?" demanded Major Duncan, after he had cast his eye at a written report, handed to him by the Sergeant, but which it was too dark to read.

"All, your honor; and all are right."

"The ammunition—arms?"

"All in order, Major Duncan, and fit for any service."

"You have the men named in my own draft, Dunham?"

"Without an exception, sir. Better men could not be found in the regiment."

"You have need of the best of our men, Sergeant. This experiment has now been tried three times; always under one of the ensigns, who have flattered me with success, but have as often failed. After so much preparation and expense, I do not like to abandon the project entirely; but this will be the last effort; and the result will mainly depend on you and on the Pathfinder."

"You may count on us both, Major Duncan. The duty you have given us is not above our habits and experience, and I think it will be well done. I know that the Pathfinder will not be wanting."

"On that, indeed, it will be safe to rely. He is a most extraordinary man, Dunham—one who long puzzled me; but who, now that I understand him, commands as much of my respect as any general in his majesty's service."

"I was in hopes, sir, that you would come to look at the proposed marriage with Mabel as a thing I ought to wish and forward."

"As for that, Sergeant, time will show," returned Lundie, smiling; though here, too, the obscurity concealed the nicer shades of expression; "one woman is sometimes more difficult to manage than a whole regiment of men."

By the way, you know that your would-be son-in-law, the Quartermaster, will be of the party; and I trust you will at least give him an equal chance in the trial for your daughter's smiles."

"If respect for his rank, sir, did not cause me to do this, your honor's wish would be sufficient."

"I thank you, Sergeant. We have served much together, and ought to value each other in our several stations. Understand me, however, I ask no more for Davy Muir than a clear field and no favor. In love, as in war, each man must gain his own victories. Are you certain that the rations have been properly calculated?"

"I'll answer for it, Major Duncan; but if they were not, we cannot suffer with two such hunters as Pathfinder and the Serpent in company."

"That will never do, Dunham," interrupted Lundie sharply; "and it comes of your American birth and American training. No thorough soldier ever relies on anything but his commissary for supplies; and I beg that no part of my regiment may be the first to set an example to the contrary. You have no doubt of the skill of this Jasper Eau-douce?"

"The boy has been tried, sir, and found equal to all that can be required of him."

"He has a French name, and has passed much of his boyhood in the French colonies; has he French blood in his veins, Sergeant?"

"Not a drop, your honor. Jasper's father was an old comrade of my own, and his mother came of an honest and loyal family in this very province."

"How came he then so much among the French, and whence his name? He speaks the language of the Canadas, too, I find."

"That is easily explained, Major Duncan. The boy was left under the care of one of our mariners in the old war, and he took to the water like a duck. Your honor knows that we have no ports on Ontario that can be named as such, and he naturally passed most of his time on the other side of the lake, where the French have had a few vessels these fifty years. He learned to speak their language, as a matter of course, and got his name from the Indians and Canadians, who are fond of calling men by their qualities, as it might be."

"A French master is but a poor instructor for a British sailor, notwithstanding."



"I beg your pardon, sir: Jasper Eau-douce was brought up under a real English seaman, one that had sailed under the king's pennant, and may be called a thorough-bred; that is to say, a subject born in the colonies, but none the worse at his trade, I hope, Major Duncan, for that."

"Perhaps not, Sergeant, perhaps not; nor any better. This Jasper behaved well, too, when I gave him the command of the *Scud*; no lad could have conducted himself more loyally or better."

"Or more bravely, Major Duncan. I am sorry to see, sir, that you have doubts as to the fidelity of Jasper."

"It is the duty of a soldier who is entrusted with the care of a distant and important post like this, Dunham, never to relax in his vigilance. We have two of the most artful enemies that the world has ever produced, in their several ways, to contend with,—the Indians and the French,—and nothing should be overlooked that can lead to injury."

"I hope your honor considers me fit to be entrusted with any particular reason that may exist for doubting Jasper, since you have seen fit to intrust me with this command."

"It is not that I doubt you, Dunham, that I hesitate to reveal all I may happen to know; but from a strong reluctance to circulate an evil report concerning one of whom I have hitherto thought well. You must think well of the Pathfinder, or you would not wish to give him your daughter?"

"For the Pathfinder's honesty I will answer with my life, sir," returned the Sergeant firmly, and not without a dignity of manner that struck his superior. "Such a man doesn't know how to be false."

"I believe you are right, Dunham; and yet this last information has unsettled all my old opinions. I have received an anonymous communication, Sergeant, advising me to be on my guard against Jasper Western, or Jasper Eau-douce, as he is called, who, it alleges, has been bought by the enemy, and giving me reason to expect that further and more precise information will soon be sent."

"Letters without signatures to them, sir, are scarcely to be regarded in war."

"Or in peace, Dunham. No one can entertain a lower opinion of the writer of an anonymous letter, in ordinary matters, than myself; the very act denotes cowardice,

meanness, and baseness; and it usually is a token of falsehood, as well as of other vices. But in matters of war it is not exactly the same thing. Besides, several suspicious circumstances have been pointed out to me."

"Such as is fit for an orderly to hear, your honor?"

"Certainly, one in whom I confide as much as in yourself, Dunham. It is said, for instance, that your daughter and her party were permitted to escape the Iroquois, when they came in, merely to give Jasper credit with me. I am told that the gentry at Frontenac will care more for the capture of the *Scud*, with Sergeant Dunham and a party of men, together with the defeat of our favorite plan, than for the capture of the girl and the scalp of her uncle."

"I understand the hint, sir, but I do not give it credit. Jasper can hardly be true, and Pathfinder false; and, as for the last, I would as soon distrust your honor as distrust him."

"It would seem so Sergeant; it would indeed seem so. But Jasper is not the Pathfinder, after all; and I will own, Dunham, I should put more faith in the lad if he didn't speak French."

"It's no recommendation in my eyes, I assure your honor; but the boy learned it by compulsion, as it were, and ought not to be condemned too hastily for the circumstance, by your honor's leave."

"It's a d—d lingo, and never did any one good—at least no British subject; for I suppose the French themselves must talk together in some language or other. I should have more faith in this Jasper, did he know nothing of their language. This letter has made me uneasy; and, were there another to whom I could trust the cutter, I would devise some means to detain him here. I have spoken to you already of a brother-in-law, who goes with you, Sergeant, and who is a sailor?"

"A real seafaring man, your honor, and somewhat prejudiced against fresh water. I doubt if he could be induced to risk his character on a lake, and I'm certain he never could find the station."

"The last is probably true, and then, the man cannot know enough of this treacherous lake to be fit for the employment. You will have to be doubly vigilant, Dunham. I give you full powers; and should you detect this Jasper in any treachery, make him a sacrifice at once to offended justice."

"Being in the service of the crown, your honor, he is amenable to martial law."

"Very true; then iron him, from his head to his heels, and send him up here in his own cutter. That brother-in-law of yours must be able to find the way back, after he has once travelled the road."

"I make no doubt, Major Duncan, we shall be able to do all that will be necessary should Jasper turn out as you seem to anticipate; though I think I would risk my life on his truth."

"I like your confidence—it speaks well for the fellow; but that infernal letter! there is such an air of truth about it; nay, there is so much truth in it, touching other matters."

"I think your honor said it wanted the name at the bottom; a great omission for an honest man to make."

"Quite right, Dunham, and no one but a rascal, and a cowardly rascal in the bargain, would write an anonymous letter on private affairs. It is different, however, in war; despatches are feigned, and artifice is generally allowed to be justifiable."

"Military manly artifices, sir, if you will; such as ambushes, surprises, feints, false attacks, and even spies; but I never heard of a true soldier who could wish to undermine the character of an honest young man by such means as these."

"I have met with many strange events, and some stranger people, in the course of my experience. But fare you well, Sergeant; I must detain you no longer. You are now on your guard, and I recommend to you untiring vigilance. I think Muir means shortly to retire; and, should you fully succeed in this enterprise, my influence will not be wanting in endeavoring to put you in the vacancy, to which you have many claims."

"I humbly thank your honor," coolly returned the Sergeant, who had been encouraged in this manner any time for the twenty preceding years, "and hope I shall never disgrace my station what ever it may be. I am what nature and Providence have made me, and hope I'm satisfied."

"You have not forgotten the howitzer?"

"Jasper took it on board this morning, sir."

"Be wary, and do not trust that man unnecessarily. Make a confidant of Pathfinder at once; he may be of service in detecting any villainy that may be stirring. His

simple honesty will favor his observation by concealing it. He *must* be true."

"For him, sir, my own head shall answer, or even my rank in the regiment. I have seen him too often tried to doubt him."

"Of all wretched sensations, Dunham, distrust, where one is compelled to confide, is the most painful. You have bethought you of the spare flints?"

"A sergeant is a safe commander for all such details, your honor."

"Well, then, give me your hand, Dunham. God bless you! and may you be successful! Muir means to retire,—by the way, let the man have an equal chance with your daughter, for it may facilitate future operations about the promotion. One would retire more cheerfully with such a companion as Mabel, than in cheerless widowhood, and with nothing but oneself to love,—and such a self, too, as Davy's!"

"I hope, sir, my child will make a prudent choice, and I think her mind is already pretty much made up in favor of Pathfinder. Still she shall have fair play, though disobedience is the next crime to mutiny."

"Have all the ammunition carefully examined and dried as soon as you arrive; the damp of the lake may affect it. And now, once more, farewell, Sergeant. Beware of that Jasper, and consult with Muir in any difficulty. I shall expect you to return, triumphant, this day month."

"God bless your honor! If anything should happen to me, I trust to you, Major Duncan, to care for an old soldier's character."

"Rely on me, Dunham—you will rely on a friend. Be vigilant: remember you will be in the very jaws of the lion;—pshaw! of no lion neither; but of treacherous tigers: in their very jaws, and beyond support. Have the flints counted and examined in the morning—and—farewell, Dunham, farewell!"

The Sergeant took the extended hand of his superior with proper respect, and they finally parted; Lundie hastening into his own movable abode, while the other left the fort, descended to the beach, and got into the boat.

It is not to be supposed that Sergeant Dunham, after he had departed from his commanding officer, was likely to forget the injunctions he had received. He thought highly of Jasper in general; but distrust had been insinuated be-



tween his former confidence and the obligations of duty; and, as he now felt that everything depended on his own vigilance, by the time the boat reached the side of the *Scud* he was in a proper humor to let no suspicious circumstance go unheeded, or any unusual movement in the young sailor pass without its comment. As a matter of course, he viewed things in the light suited to his peculiar mood; and his precautions, as well as his distrust, partook of the habits, opinions, and education of the man.

Sergeant Dunham, having first ascertained that both his daughter and her female companion were on the quarter-deck, led the Pathfinder to the after-cabin, where, closing the door with great caution, and otherwise making certain that he was beyond the reach of eavesdroppers, he commenced as follows:—

"It is now many years, my friend, since you began to experience the hardships and dangers of the woods in my company."

"It is, Sergeant; yes, it is. I sometimes fear I am too old for Mabel, who was not born until you and I had fought the Frenchers as comrades."

"No fear on that account, Pathfinder. I was near your age before I prevailed on the mind of her mother; and Mabel is a steady, thoughtful girl, one that will regard character more than anything else. A lad like Jasper Eau-douce, for instance, will have no chance with her, though he is both young and comely."

"Does Jasper think of marrying?" inquired the guide, simply but earnestly.

"I should hope not—at least, not until he has satisfied every one of his fitness to possess a wife."

"Jasper is a gallant boy, and one of the great gifts in his way; he may claim a wife as well as another."

"To be frank with you, Pathfinder, I brought you here to talk about this very youngster. Major Duncan has received some information which has led him to suspect that Eau-douce is false, and in the pay of the enemy; I wish to hear your opinion on the subject."

"Anan?"

"I say, the Major suspects Jasper of being a traitor—a French spy—or, what is worse, of being bought to betray us. He has received a letter to this effect, and has been charging me to keep an eye on the boy's movements; for

he fears we shall meet with enemies when we least suspect it, and by his means."

"Duncan of Lundie has told you this, Sergeant Dunham?"

"He has indeed, Pathfinder; and, though I have been loath to believe anything to the injury of Jasper, I have a feeling which tells me I ought to distrust him. Do you believe in presentiments, my friend?"

"In what, Sergeant?"

"Presentiments,—a sort of secret foreknowledge of events that are about to happen. The Scotch of our regiment are great sticklers for such things; and my opinion of Jasper is changing so fast, that I begin to fear there must be some truth in their doctrines."

"But you've been talking with Duncan of Lundie concerning Jasper, and his words have raised misgivings."

"Not it, no so in the least; for, while conversing with the Major, my feelings were altogether the other way; and I endeavored to convince him all I could that he did the boy injustice. But there is no use in holding out against a presentiment, I find; and I fear there is something in the suspicion after all."

"I know nothing of presentiments, Sergeant; but I have known Jasper Eau-douce since he was a boy, and I have as much faith in his honesty as I have in my own, or that of the Serpent himself."

"But the Serpent, Pathfinder, has his tricks and ambushes in war as well as another."

"Ay, them are his nat'ral gifts, and are such as belong to his people. Neither red-skin nor pale-face can deny natur'; but Chingachgook is not a man to feel a presentiment against."

"That I believe; nor should I have thought ill of Jasper this very morning. It seems to me, Pathfinder, since I've taken up this presentiment, that the lad does not bustle about his deck naturally, as he used to do; but that he is silent and moody and thoughtful, like a man who has a load on his conscience."

"Jasper is never noisy; and he tells me noisy ships are generally ill-worked ships. Master Cap agrees in this too. No, no; I will believe naught against Jasper until I see it. The conversation now ceased, and, after a short delay, the whole party returned to the deck, each individual disposed to view the conduct of the suspected Jasper in the manner most suited to his own habits and character."

## CHAPTER VIII

ALL this time matters were elsewhere passing in their usual train. Jasper, like the weather and his vessel, seemed to be waiting for the land-breeze; while the soldiers, accustomed to early rising, had, to a man, sought their pallets in the main hold. None remained on deck but the people of the cutter, Mr. Muir, and the two females. The Quartermaster was endeavoring to render himself agreeable to Mabel, while our heroine herself, little affected by his assiduities, which she ascribed partly to the habitual gallantry of a soldier, and partly, perhaps, to her own pretty face, was enjoying the peculiarities of a scene and situation which, to her, were full of the charms of novelty.

The sails had been hoisted, but as yet not a breath of air was in motion; and so still and placid was the lake, that not the smallest motion was perceptible in the cutter. She had drifted in the river-current to a distance a little exceeding a quarter of a mile from the land, and there she lay, beautiful in her symmetry and form, but like a fixture. Young Jasper was on the quarter-deck, near enough to hear occasionally the conversation which passed; but too diffident of his own claim, and too intent on his duties, to attempt to mingle in it. The fine blue eyes of Mabel followed his motions in curious expectation, and more than once the Quartermaster had to repeat his compliments before she heard them, so intent was she on the little occurrences of the vessel, and, we might add, so indifferent to the eloquence of her companion. At length, even Mr. Muir became silent, and there was a deep stillness on the water. Presently an oar-blade fell in a boat beneath the fort, and the sound reached the cutter as distinctly as if it had been produced on her deck. Then came a murmur, like a sigh of the night, a fluttering of the canvas, the creaking of the boom, and the flap of the jib. These well-known sounds were followed by a slight heel in the cutter, and by the bellying of the sails.

"Here's the wind, Anderson," called out Jasper to the oldest of his sailors; "take the helm."

This brief order was obeyed; the helm was put up, the cutter's bows fell off, and in a few minutes the water was heard murmuring under her head, as the *Scud* glanced through the lake at the rate of five miles in the hour. All

this passed in profound silence, when Jasper again gave the order to "ease off the sheets a little and keep her along the land."

It was at this instant that the party from the after-cabin reappeared on the quarter-deck.

"You've no inclination, Jasper lad, to trust yourself too near our neighbors the French," observed Muir, who took that occasion to recommence the discourse. "Well, well, your prudence will never be questioned by me, for I like the Canadas as little as you can possibly like them yourself."

"I hug this shore, Mr. Muir, on account of the wind. The land-breeze is always freshest close in, provided you are not so near as to make a lee of the trees. We have Mexico Bay to cross; and that, on the present course, will give us quite offing enough."

"I'm right glad it's not the Bay of Mexico," put in Cap, "which is a part of the world I would rather not visit in one of your inland craft. Does your cutter bear a weather helm, master Eau-douce?"

"She is easy on her rudder, master Cap; but likes looking up at the breeze as well as another, when in lively motion."

"I suppose you have such things as reefs, though you can hardly have occasion to use them?"

Mabel's bright eye detected the smile that gleamed for an instant on Jasper's handsome face; but no one else saw that momentary exhibition of surprise and contempt.

"We have reefs, and often have occasion to use them," quietly returned the young man. "Before we get in, Master Cap, an opportunity may offer to show you the manner in which we do so; for there is easterly weather brewing, and the wind cannot chop, even on the ocean itself, more readily than it flies round on Lake Ontario."

"So much for knowing no better! I have seen the wind in the Atlantic fly round like a coach-wheel, in a way to keep your sails shaking for an hour, and the ship would become perfectly motionless from not knowing which way to turn."

"We have no such sudden changes here, certainly," Jasper mildly answered; "though we think ourselves liable to unexpected shifts of wind. I hope, however, to carry this land-breeze as far as the first islands; after which there will be less danger of our being seen and followed by any of the look-out boats from Frontenac."



"Do you think the French keep spies out on the broad lake, Jasper?" inquired the Pathfinder.

"We know they do; one was off Oswego during the night of Monday last. A bark canoe came close in with the eastern point, and landed an Indian and an officer. Had you been outlying that night, as usual, we should have secured one, if not both of them."

It was too dark to betray the color that deepened on the weather-burnt features of the guide; for he felt the consciousness of having lingered in the fort that night, listening to the sweet tones of Mabel's voice as she sang ballads to her father, and gazing at the countenance which, to him, was radiant with charms. Probity in thought and deed being the distinguishing quality of this extraordinary man's mind, while he felt that a sort of disgrace ought to attach to his idleness on the occasion mentioned, the last thought that could occur would be to attempt to palliate or deny his negligence.

"I confess it, Jasper, I confess it," said he humbly. "Had I been out that night,—and I now recollect no sufficient reason why I was not,—it might, indeed, have turned out as you say."

"It was the evening you passed with us, Pathfinder," Mabel innocently remarked; "surely one who lives so much of his time in the forest, in front of the enemy, may be excused for giving a few hours of his time to an old friend and his daughter."

"Nay, nay, I've done little else but idle since we reached the garrison," returned the other, sighing; "and it is well that the lad should tell me of it: the idler needs a rebuke—yes, he needs a rebuke."

"Rebuke, Pathfinder! I never dreamt of saying anything disagreeable, and least of all would I think of rebuking you, because a solitary spy and an Indian or two have escaped us. Now I know where you were, I think your absence the most natural thing in the world."

"I think nothing of what you said, Jasper, since it was deserved. We are all human, and all do wrong."

"This is unkind, Pathfinder."

"Give me your hand, lad, give me your hand. It wasn't you that gave the lesson; it was conscience."

"Well, well," interrupted Cap; "now this latter matter is settled to the satisfaction of all parties, perhaps you will tell us how it happened to be known that there were spies

near us so lately. This looks amazingly like a circumstance."

As the mariner uttered the last sentence, he pressed a foot slyly on that of the Sergeant, and nudged the guide with his elbow, winking at the same time, though this sign was lost in the obscurity.

"It is known, because their trail was found next day by the Serpent, and it was that of a military boot and a moccasin. One of our hunters, moreover, saw the canoe crossing towards Frontenac next morning."

"Did the trail lead near the garrison, Jasper?" Pathfinder asked in a manner so meek and subdued that it resembled the tone of a rebuked schoolboy. "Did the trail lead near the garrison, lad?"

"We thought not; though, of course, it did not cross the river. It was followed down to the eastern point, at the river's mouth, where what was doing in port might be seen; but it did not cross, as we could discover."

"And why didn't you get under weigh, Master Jasper," Cap demanded, "and give chase? On Tuesday morning it blew a good breeze; one in which this cutter might have run nine knots."

"That may do on the ocean, Master Cap," put in Pathfinder, "but it would not do here. Water leaves no trail, and a Mingo and a Frenchman are a match for the devil in a pursuit."

"Who wants a trail when the chase can be seen from the deck, as Jasper here said was the case with this canoe? and it mattered nothing if there were twenty of your Mingos and Frenchmen, with a good British-built bottom in their wake. I'll engage, Master Eau-douce, had you given me a call that said Tuesday morning, that we should have overhauled the blackguards."

"I daresay, Master Cap, that the advice of as old a seaman as you might have done no harm to as young a sailor as myself, but it is a long and a hopeless chase that has a bark canoe in it."

"You would have had only to press it hard, to drive it ashore."

"Ashore, master Cap! You do not understand our lake navigation at all, if you suppose it an easy matter to force a bark canoe ashore. As soon as they find themselves pressed, these bubbles paddle right into the wind's eye, and

before you know it, you find yourself a mile or two dead under their lee."

"You don't wish me to believe, Master Jasper, that any one is so heedless of drowning as to put off into this lake in one of them eggshells when there is any wind?"

"I have often crossed Ontario in a bark canoe, even when there has been a good deal of sea on. Well managed, they are the driest boats of which we have any knowledge."

Cap now led his brother-in-law and the Pathfinder aside, when he assured him that the admission of Jasper concerning the spies was "a circumstance," and "a strong circumstance," and as such it deserved his deliberate investigation; while his account of the canoes was so improbable as to wear the appearance of brow-beating the listeners.

Pathfinder saw nothing extraordinary in Jasper's knowing the facts he had related; while he did feel it was unusual, not to say disgraceful, that he himself now heard of them for the first time.

"As for the moccasins, Master Cap," said he, when a short pause invited him to speak, "they may be worn by pale-faces as well as by red-skins, it is true, though they never leave the same trail on the foot of one as on the foot of the other. Any one who is used to the woods can tell the footstep of an Indian from the footstep of a white man, whether it be made by a boot or a moccasin. It will need better evidence than this to persuade me into the belief that Jasper is false."

"You will allow, Pathfinder, that there are such things in the world as traitors?" put in Cap logically.

"I never knew an honest-minded Mingo,—one that you could put faith in, if he had a temptation to deceive you. Cheating seems to be their gift, and I sometimes think they ought to be pitied for it, rather than persecuted."

"Then why not believe that this Jasper may have the same weakness? A man is a man, and human nature is sometimes but a poor concern, as I know by experience."

This was the opening of another long and desultory conversation, in which the probability of Jasper's guilt or innocence was argued *pro* and *con.*, until both the Sergeant and his brother-in-law had nearly reasoned themselves into settled convictions in favor of the first, while their companion grew sturdier and sturdier in his defence of the

accused, and still more fixed in his opinion of his being unjustly charged with treachery.

The season and the night, to represent them truly, were of a nature to stimulate the sensations which youth, health, and happiness are wont to associate with novelty. The weather warm, as is not always the case in that region even in summer, while the air that came off the land, in breathing currents, brought with it the coolness and fragrance of the forest. The wind was far from being fresh, though there was enough of it to drive the *Scud* merrily ahead, and, perhaps, to keep the attention alive, in the uncertainty that more or less accompanies darkness. Jasper, however, appeared to regard it with complacency, as was apparent by what he said in a short dialogue that now occurred between him and Mabel.

"At this rate, Eau-douce,"—for so Mabel had already learned to style the young sailor,—said our heroine, "we cannot be long in reaching our place of destination."

"Has your father then told you what that is, Mabel?"

"He has told me nothing; my father is too much of a soldier, and too little used to have a family around him, to talk of such matters. Is it forbidden to say whither we are bound?"

"It cannot be far, while we steer in this direction, for sixty or seventy miles will take us into the St. Lawrence, which the French might make too hot for us; and no voyage on this lake can be very long."

"So says my uncle Cap; but to me, Jasper, Ontario and the ocean appear very much the same."

"You have then been on the ocean; while I, who pretend to be a sailor, have never yet seen salt water. You must have a great contempt for such a mariner as myself, in your heart, Mabel Dunham?"

"Then I have no such thing in my heart, Jasper Eau-douce. What right have I, a girl without experience or knowledge, to despise any, much less one like you, who are trusted by the Major, and who command a vessel like this? I have never been on the ocean, though I have seen it; and, I repeat, I see no difference between this lake and the Atlantic."

"Nor in them that sail on both? I was afraid, Mabel, your uncle had said so much against us fresh-water sailors, that you had begun to look upon us as little better than pretenders?"



"Give yourself no uneasiness on that account, Jasper; for I know my uncle, and he says as many things against those who live ashore, when at York, as he now says against those who sail on fresh water. No, no, neither my father nor myself think anything of such opinions. My uncle Cap, if he spoke openly, would be found to have even a worse notion of a soldier than of a sailor who never saw the sea."

"But your father, Mabel, has a better opinion of soldiers than of any one else? he wishes you to be the wife of a soldier?"

"Jasper Eau-douce!—I the wife of a soldier! My father wishes it! Why should he wish any such a thing? What soldier is there in the garrison that I could marry—that he could *wish me* to marry?"

"One may love a calling so well as to fancy it will cover a thousand imperfections."

"But one is not likely to love his own calling so well as to cause him to overlook everything else. You say my father wishes me to marry a soldier; and yet there is no soldier at Oswego that he would be likely to give me to. I am in an awkward position; for while I am not good enough to be the wife of one of the gentlemen of the garrison, I think even you will admit, Jasper, I am too good to be the wife of one of the common soldiers."

As Mabel spoke thus frankly she blushed, she knew not why, though the obscurity concealed the fact from her companion; and she laughed faintly, like one who felt that the subject, however embarrassing it might be, deserved to be treated fairly. Jasper, it would seem, viewed her position differently from herself.

"It is true Mabel," said he, "you are not what is called a lady, in the common meaning of the word."

"Not in any meaning, Jasper," the generous girl eagerly interrupted: "on that head, I have no vanities, I hope. Providence has made me the daughter of a sergeant, and I am content to remain in the station in which I was born."

"But all do not remain in the stations in which they were born, Mabel; for some rise above them, and some fall below them. Many sergeants have become officers—even generals; and why may not sergeant's daughters become officers' ladies?"

"In the case of Sergeant Dunham's daughter, I know no better reason than the fact that no officer is likely to wish to make her his wife," returned Mabel, laughing.

"*You* may think so; but there are some in the 55th that know better. There is certainly one officer in that regiment, Mabel, who *does* wish to make you his wife."

Quick as the flashing lightning, the rapid thoughts of Mabel Dunham glanced over the five or six subalterns of the corps, who, by age and inclinations, would be the most likely to form such a wish; and we should do injustice to her habits, perhaps, were we not to say that a lively sensation of pleasure rose momentarily in her bosom, at the thought of being raised above a station which, whatever might be her professions of contentment, she felt that she had been too well educated to fill with perfect satisfaction. But this emotion was as transient as it was sudden; for Mabel Dunham was a girl of too much pure and womanly feeling to view the marriage tie through anything so worldly as the mere advantages of station. The passing emotion was a thrill produced by factitious habits, while the more settled opinion which remained was the offspring of nature and principles.

"I know no officer in the 55th, or any other regiment, who would be likely to do so foolish a thing; nor do I think I myself would do so foolish a thing as to marry an officer."

"Foolish, Mabel!"

"Yes, foolish, Jasper. You know, as well as I can know, what the world would think of such matters; and I should be sorry, very sorry, to find that my husband ever regretted that he had so far yielded to a fancy for a face or a figure as to have married the daughter of one so much his inferior as a sergeant."

"*Your* husband, Mabel, will not be so likely to think of the father as to think of the daughter."

The girl was talking with spirit, though feeling evidently entered into her part of the discourse; but she paused for nearly a minute after Jasper had made the last observation before she uttered another word. Then she continued, in a manner less playful, and one critically attentive might have fancied in a manner slightly melancholy,—

"Parent and child ought so to live as not to have two hearts, or two modes of feeling and thinking. A common interest in all things I should think as necessary to happiness in man and wife, as between the other members of the same family. Most of all, ought neither the man nor

the woman to have any unusual cause for unhappiness, the world furnishing so many of itself."

"Am I to understand, then, Mabel, you would refuse to marry an officer, merely because he was an officer?"

"Have you a right to ask such a question, Jasper?" said Mabel, smiling.

"No other right than what a strong desire to see you happy can give, which, after all, may be very little. My anxiety has been increased, from happening to know that it is your father's intention to persuade you to marry Lieutenant Muir."

"My dear, dear father can entertain no notion so ridiculous—no notion so cruel!"

"Would it, then, be cruel to wish you the wife of a quarter-master?"

"I have told you what I think on that subject, and cannot make my words stronger. Having answered you so frankly, Jasper, I have a right to ask how you know that my father thinks of any such thing?"

"That he has chosen a husband for you, I know from his own mouth; for he has told me this much during our frequent conversations while he has been superintending the shipment of the stores; and that Mr. Muir is to offer for you, I know from the officer himself, who has told me as much. By putting the two things together, I have come to the opinion mentioned."

"May not my dear father, Jasper,"—Mabel's face glowed like fire while she spoke, though her words escaped her slowly, and by a sort of involuntary impulse,—"*may not my dear father have been thinking of another? It does not follow, from what you say, that Mr. Muir was in his mind.*"

"Is it not probable, Mabel, from all that has passed? What brings the Quartermaster here? He has never found it necessary before to accompany the parties that have gone below. He thinks of you for his wife; and your father has made up his own mind that you shall be so. You must see, Mabel, that Mr. Muir follows *you?*"

Mabel made no answer. Her feminine instinct had, indeed, told her that she was an object of admiration with the Quartermaster; though she had hardly supposed to the extent that Jasper believed; and she, too, had even gathered from the discourse of her father that he thought seriously of having her disposed of in marriage; but by no process

of reasoning could she ever have arrived at the inference that Mr. Muir was to be the man. She did not believe it now, though she was far from suspecting the truth. Indeed, it was her own opinion that these casual remarks of her father, which had struck her, had proceeded from a general wish to have her settled, rather than from any desire to see her united to any particular individual. These thoughts, however, she kept secret; for self-respect and feminine reserve showed her the impropriety of making them the subject of discussion with her present companion. By way of changing the conversation, therefore, after the pause had lasted long enough to be embarrassing to both parties, she said, "Of one thing you may be certain, Jasper,—and that is all I wish to say on the subject,—Lieutenant Muir, though he were a colonel, will never be the husband of Mabel Dunham. And now, tell me of your voyage;—when will it end?"

"That is uncertain. Once afloat, we are at the mercy of the winds and waves. Pathfinder will tell you that he who begins to chase the deer in the morning cannot tell where he will sleep at night."

"But we are not chasing a deer, nor is it morning: so Pathfinder's moral is thrown away."

"Although we are not chasing a deer, we are after that which may be as hard to catch. I can tell you no more than I have said already; for it is our duty to be close-mouthed, whether anything depends on it or not. I am afraid, however, I shall not keep you long enough in the *Scud* to show you what she can do at need."

"I think a woman unwise who ever marries a sailor," said Mabel abruptly, and almost involuntarily.

"This is a strange opinion; why do you hold it?"

"Because a sailor's wife is certain to have a rival in his vessel. My uncle Cap, too, says that a sailor should never marry."

"He means salt-water sailors," returned Jasper, laughing. "If he thinks wives not good enough for those who sail on the ocean, he will fancy them just suited to those who sail on the lakes. I hope, Mabel, you do not take your opinions of us fresh-water mariners from all that Master Cap says."

"Sail, ho!" exclaimed the very individual of whom they were conversing; "or boat, ho! would be nearer the truth."

Jasper ran forward; and, sure enough, a small object



was discernible about a hundred yards ahead of the cutter, and nearly on her lee bow. At the first glance, he saw it was a bark canoe; for, though the darkness prevented hues from being distinguished, the eye that had become accustomed to the night might discern forms at some little distance; and the eye which, like Jasper's, had long been familiar with things aquatic, could not be at a loss in discovering the outlines necessary to come to the conclusion he did.

"This may be an enemy," the young man remarked; "and it may be well to overhaul him."

"He is paddling with all his might, lad," observed the Pathfinder, "and means to cross your bows and get to windward, when you might as well chase a full-grown buck on snow-shoes!"

"Let her luff," cried Jasper to the man at the helm. "Luff up, till she shakes. There, steady, and hold all that."

The helmsman complied; and, as the *Scud* was now dashing the water aside merrily, a minute or two put the canoe so far to leeward as to render escape impracticable. Jasper now sprang to the helm himself; and, by judicious and careful handling, he got so near his chase that it was secured by a boat-hook. On receiving an order, the two persons who were in the canoe left it, and no sooner had they reached the deck of the cutter than they were found to be Arrowhead and his wife.

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## CHAPTER IX

THE meeting with the Indian and his wife excited no surprise in the majority of those who witnessed the occurrence; but Mabel, and all who knew of the manner in which this chief had been separated from the party of Cap, simultaneously entertained suspicions, which it was far easier to feel than to follow out by any plausible clue to certainty. Pathfinder, who alone could converse freely with the prisoners, for such they might now be considered, took Arrowhead aside, and held a long conversation with him, concerning the reasons of the latter for having deserted his charge and the manner in which he had been since employed.

The Tuscarora met these inquiries, and he gave his an-

swers with the stoicism of an Indian. As respects the separation, his excuses were very simply made, and they seemed to be sufficiently plausible. When he found that the party was discovered in its place of concealment, he naturally sought his own safety, which he secured by plunging into the woods. In a word, he had run away in order to save his life.

"This is well," returned Pathfinder, affecting to believe the other's apologies; "my brother did very wisely; but his woman followed?"

"Do not the pale-faces' women follow their husbands? Would not Pathfinder have looked back to see if one he loved was coming?"

This appeal was made to the guide while he was in a most fortunate frame of mind to admit its force; for Mabel and her blandishments and constancy were becoming images familiar to his thoughts. The Tuscarora, though he could not trace the reason, saw that his excuse was admitted, and he stood with quiet dignity awaiting the next inquiry.

"This is reasonable and natural," returned Pathfinder; "this is natural, and may be so. A woman would be likely to follow the man to whom she had plighted faith, and husband and wife are one flesh. Your words are honest, Tuscarora," changing the language to the dialect of the other. "Your words are honest, and very pleasant and just. But why has my brother been so long from the fort? His friends have thought of him often, but have never seen him."

"If the doe follows the buck, ought not the buck to follow the doe?" answered the Tuscarora, smiling, as he laid a finger significantly on the shoulder of his interrogator. "Arrowhead's wife followed Arrowhead; it was right in Arrowhead to follow his wife. She lost her way, and they made her cook in a strange wigwam."

"I understand you, Tuscarora. The woman fell into the hands of the Mingos, and you kept upon their trail."

"Pathfinder can see a reason as easily as he can see the moss on the trees. It is so."

"And how long have you got the woman back, and in what manner has it been done?"

"Two suns. The Dew-of-June was not long in coming when her husband whispered to her the path."

"Well, well, all this seems natural, and according to matrimony. But, Tuscarora, how did you get that canoe,

and why are you paddling towards the St. Lawrence instead of the garrison?"

"Arrowhead can tell his own from that of another. This canoe is mine; I found it on the shore near the fort."

"That sounds reasonable, too, for the canoe does belong to the man, and an Indian would make few words about taking it. Still, it is extraordinary that we saw nothing of the fellow and his wife, for the canoe must have left the river before we did ourselves."

This idea, which passed rapidly through the mind of the guide, was now put to the Indian in the shape of a question.

"Pathfinder knows that a warrior can have shame. The father would have asked me for his daughter, and I could not give her to him. I sent the Dew-of-June for the canoe, and no one spoke to the woman. A Tuscarora woman would not be free in speaking to strange men."

All this, too, was plausible, and in conformity with Indian character and customs. As was usual, Arrowhead had received one half of his compensation previously to quitting the Mohawk; and his refraining to demand the residue was a proof of that conscientious consideration of mutual rights that quite as often distinguishes the morality of a savage as that of a Christian. To one as upright as Pathfinder, Arrowhead had conducted himself with delicacy and propriety, though it would have been more in accordance with his own frank nature to have met the father, and abided by the simple truth. Still, accustomed to the ways of Indians, he saw nothing out of the ordinary track of things in the course the other had taken.

"This runs like water flowing down hill, Arrowhead," he answered, after a little reflection, "and truth obliges me to own it. It was the gift of a red-skin to act in this way, though I do not think it was the gift of a pale-face. You would not look upon the grief of the girl's father?"

Arrowhead made a quiet inclination of the body as if to assent.

"One thing more my brother will tell me," continued Pathfinder, "and there will be no cloud between his wigwam and the strong-house of the Yengeese. If he can blow away this bit of fog with his breath, his friends will look at him as he sits by his own fire, and he can look at them as they lay aside their arms, and forget that they are warriors. Why was the head of Arrowhead's canoe looking

towards the St. Lawrence, where there are none but enemies to be found?"

"Why were the Pathfinder and his friends looking the same way?" asked the Tuscarora calmly. "A Tuscarora may look in the same direction as a Yengeese."

"Why, to own the truth, Arrowhead, we are out scouting like; that is, sailing—in other words, we are on the king's business, and we have a right to be here, though we may not have a right to say *why* we are here."

"Arrowhead saw the big canoe, and he loves to look on the face of Eau-douce. He was going towards the sun at evening in order to seek his wigwam; but, finding that the young sailor was going the other way, he turned that he might look in the same direction. Eau-douce and Arrowhead were together on the last trail."

"This may all be true, Tuscarora, and you are welcome. You shall eat of our venison, and then we must separate. The setting sun is behind us, and both of us move quick: my brother will get too far from that which he seeks, unless he turns round."

Pathfinder now returned to the others, and repeated the result of his examination. He appeared himself to believe that the account of Arrowhead might be true, though he admitted that caution would be prudent with one he disliked; but his auditors, Jasper excepted, seemed less disposed to put faith in the explanations.

"This chap must be ironed at once, brother Dunham," said Cap, as soon as Pathfinder finished his narration; "he must be turned over to the master-at-arms, if there is any such officer on fresh water, and a court-martial ought to be ordered as soon as we reach port."

"I think it wisest to detain the fellow," the Sergeant answered; "but irons are unnecessary so long as he remains in the cutter. In the morning the matter shall be inquired into."

Arrowhead was now summoned and told the decision. The Indian listened gravely, and made no objections. On the contrary, he submitted with the calm and reserved dignity with which the American aborigines are known to yield to fate; and he stood apart, an attentive but calm observer of what was passing. Jasper caused the cutter's sails to be filled, and the *Scud* resumed her course.

It was now getting near the hour to set the watch, and when it was usual to retire for the night. Most of the



party went below, leaving no one on deck but Cap, the Sergeant, Jasper, and two of the crew. Arrowhead and his wife also remained, the former standing aloof in proud reserve, and the latter exhibiting, by her attitude and passiveness, the meek humility that characterizes an Indian woman.

"You will find a place for your wife below, Arrowhead, where my daughter will attend to her wants," said the Sergeant kindly, who was himself on the point of quitting the deck; "yonder is a sail where you may sleep yourself."

"I thank my father. The Tuscaroras are not poor. The woman will look for my blankets in the canoe."

"As you wish, my friend. We think it necessary to detain you; but not necessary to confine or to maltreat you. Send your squaw into the canoe for the blankets and you may follow her yourself, and hand us up the paddles. As there may be some sleepy heads in the *Scud*, Eau-douce," added the Sergeant in a lower tone, "it may be well to secure the paddles."

Jasper assented, and Arrowhead and his wife, with whom resistance appeared to be out of the question, silently complied with the directions. A few expressions of sharp rebuke passed from the Indian to his wife, while both were employed in the canoe, which the latter received with submissive quiet, immediately repairing an error she had made by laying aside the blanket she had taken and searching for another that was more to her tyrant's mind.

"Come, bear a hand, Arrowhead," said the Sergeant, who stood on the gunwale overlooking the movements of the two, which were proceeding too slowly for the impatience of a drowsy man; "it is getting late; and we soldiers have such a thing as *réveille*—early to bed and early to rise."

"Arrowhead is coming," was the answer, as the Tuscarora stepped towards the head of his canoe.

One blow of his keen knife severed the rope which held the boat, and then the cutter glanced ahead, leaving the light bubble of bark, which instantly lost its way, almost stationary. So suddenly and dexterously was this manœuvre performed, that the canoe was on the lee quarter of the *Scud* before the Sergeant was aware of the artifice, and quite in her wake ere he had time to announce it to his companions.

"Hard-a-lee!" shouted Jasper, letting fly the jib-sheet with his own hands, when the cutter came swiftly up to the

breeze, with all her canvas flapping, or was running into the wind's eye, as seamen term it, until the light craft was a hundred feet to windward of her former position. Quick and dexterous as was this movement, and ready as had been the expedient, it was not quicker or more ready than that of the *Tuscarora*. With an intelligence that denoted some familiarity with vessels, he had seized his paddle and was already skimming the water, aided by the efforts of his wife. The direction he took was south-westerly, or on a line that led him equally towards the wind and the shore, while it also kept him so far aloof from the cutter as to avoid the danger of the latter falling on board of him when she filled on the other tack. Swiftly as the *Scud* had shot into the wind, and far as she had forced ahead, Jasper knew it was necessary to cast her ere she had lost all her way; and it was not two minutes from the time the helm had been put down before the lively little craft was aback forward, and rapidly falling off, in order to allow her sails to fill on the opposite tack.

"He will escape!" said Jasper the instant he caught a glimpse of the relative bearings of the cutter and the canoe. "The cunning knave is paddling dead to windward, and the *Scud* can never overtake him!"

"You have a canoe!" exclaimed the Sergeant, manifesting the eagerness of a boy to join in the pursuit; "let us launch it, and give chase!"

"It will be useless. If Pathfinder had been on deck, there might have been a chance; but there is none now. To launch the canoe would have taken three or four minutes, and the time lost would be sufficient for the purposes of Arrowhead."

Both Cap and the Sergeant saw the truth of this, which would have been nearly self-evident even to one unaccustomed to vessels. The shore was distant less than half a mile, and the canoe was already glancing into its shadows, at a rate to show that it would reach the land before its pursuers could probably get half the distance. The helm of the *Scud* was reluctantly put up again, and the cutter wore short round on her heel, coming up to her course on the other tack, as if acting on an instinct. All this was done by Jasper in profound silence, his assistants understanding what was necessary, and lending their aid in a sort of mechanical imitation. While these manœuvres were in the course of execution, Cap took the Sergeant by a

button, and led him towards the cabin-door, where he was out of ear-shot, and began to unlock his stores of thought.

"Hark'e, brother Dunham," said he, with an ominous face, "this is a matter that requires mature thought and much circumspection."

"The life of a soldier, brother Cap, is one of constant thought and circumspection. On this frontier, were we to overlook either, our scalps might be taken from our heads in the first nap."

"But I consider this capture of Arrowhead as a circumstance; and I might add his escape as another. This Jasper Freshwater must look to it."

"They are both circumstances truly, brother; but they tell different ways. If it is a circumstance against the lad that the Indian has escaped, it is a circumstance in his favor that he was first taken."

"Ay, ay, but two circumstances do not contradict each other like two negatives. If you will follow the advice of an old seaman, Sergeant, not a moment is to be lost in taking the steps necessary for the security of the vessel and all on board of her. The cutter is now slipping through the water at the rate of six knots, and as the distances are so short on this bit of a pond, we may all find ourselves in a French port before morning, and in a French prison before night."

"This may be true enough. What would you advise me to do, brother?"

"In my opinion you should put this Master Freshwater under arrest on the spot; send him below under the charge of a sentinel, and transfer the command of the cutter to me. All this you have power to perform, the craft belonging to the army, and you being the commanding officer of the troops present."

Sergeant Dunham deliberated more than an hour on the propriety of this proposal; for, though sufficiently prompt when his mind was really made up, he was habitually thoughtful and wary. The habit of superintending the personal police of the garrison had made him acquainted with character, and he had long been disposed to think well of Jasper. Still that subtle poison, suspicion, had entered his soul; and so much were the artifices and intrigues of the French dreaded, that, especially warned as he had been by his commander, it is not to be wondered that the recollection of years of good conduct should van-

ish under the influence of a distrust so keen, and seemingly so plausible. In this embarrassment the Sergeant consulted the Quartermaster, whose opinion, as his superior, he felt bound to respect, though at the moment independent of his control. It is an unfortunate occurrence for one who is in a dilemma to ask advice of another who is desirous of standing well in his favor, the party consulted being almost certain to try to think in the manner which will be the most agreeable to the party consulting. In the present instance it was equally unfortunate, as respects a candid consideration of the subject, that Cap, instead of the Sergeant himself, made the statement of the case; for the earnest old sailor was not backward in letting his listener perceive to which side he was desirous that the Quartermaster should lean. Lieutenant Muir was much too politic to offend the uncle and father of the woman he hoped and expected to win, had he really thought the case admitted of doubt; but, in the manner in which the facts were submitted to him, he was seriously inclined to think that it would be well to put the control of the *Scud* temporarily into the management of Cap, as a precaution against treachery. This opinion then decided the Sergeant, who forthwith set about the execution of the necessary measures.

Without entering into any explanations, Sergeant Dunham simply informed Jasper that he felt it to be his duty to deprive him temporarily of the command of the cutter, and to confer it on his own brother-in-law. A natural and involuntary burst of surprise, which escaped the young man, was met by a quiet remark, reminding him that military service was often of a nature that required concealment, and a declaration that the present duty was of such a character that this particular arrangement had become indispensable. Although Jasper's astonishment remained undiminished,—The Sergeant cautiously abstaining from making any allusion to his suspicions,—the young man was accustomed to obey with military submission; and he quietly acquiesced, with his own mouth directing the little crew to receive their further orders from Cap until another change should be effected. When, however, he was told the case required that not only he himself, but his principal assistant, who, on account of his long acquaintance with the lake, was usually termed the pilot, were to remain below, there was an alteration in his countenance and manner that denoted strong feeling, though it was so well



mastered as to leave even the distrustful Cap in doubt as to its meaning. As a matter of course, however, when distrust exists, it was not long before the worst construction was put upon it.

As soon as Jasper and the pilot were below, the sentinel at the hatch received private orders to pay particular attention to both; to allow neither to come on deck again without giving instant notice to the person who might then be in charge of the cutter, and to insist on his return below as soon as possible. This precaution, however, was uncalled for; Jasper and his assistant both throwing themselves silently on their pallets, which neither quitted again that night.

"And now, Sergeant," said Cap, as soon as he found himself master of the deck, "you will just have the goodness to give me the courses and distance, that I may see the boat keeps her head the right way."

"I know nothing of either, brother Cap," returned Dunham, not a little embarrassed at the question. "We must make the best of our way to the station among the Thousand Islands, where 'we shall land, relieve the party that is already out, and get information for our future government.' That's it, nearly word for word, as it stands in the written orders."

"But you can muster a chart—something in the way of bearings and distances, that I may see the road?"

"I do not think Jasper ever had anything of the sort to go by."

"No chart, Sergeant Dunham!"

"Not a scrap of a pen even. Our sailors navigate this lake without any aid from maps."

"The devil they do! They must be regular Yahoos. And do you suppose, Sergeant Dunham, that I can find one island out of a thousand without knowing its name or its position, without even a course or a distance?"

"As for the *name*, brother Cap, you need not be particular, for not one of the whole thousand *has* a name, and so a mistake can never be made on that score. As for the position, never having been there myself, I can tell you nothing about it, nor do I think its position of any particular consequence, provided we find the spot.

As the wind grew lighter, as usual with the advance of night, and there were no immediate obstacles to the navigation, the Sergeant made a bed of a sail on deck, and was

soon lost in the sound sleep of a soldier. Cap continued to walk the deck, for he was not one whose iron frame set fatigue at defiance, and not once that night did he close his eyes.

It was broad daylight when Sergeant Dunham awoke, and the exclamation of surprise that escaped him, as he rose to his feet and began to look about him, was stronger than it was usual for one so drilled to suffer to be heard. He found the weather entirely changed, the view bounded by driving mist that limited the visible horizon to a circle of about a mile in diameter, the lake raging and covered with foam, and the *Scud* lying-to. A brief conversation with his brother-in-law let him into the secrets of all these sudden changes.

According to the account of Master Cap, the wind had died away to a calm about midnight, or just as he was thinking of heaving-to, to sound, for islands ahead were beginning to be seen. At one A. M. it began to blow from the north-east, accompanied by a drizzle, and he stood off to the northward and westward, knowing that the coast of New York lay in the opposite direction. At half-past one he stowed the flying-jib, reefed the mainsail, and took the bonnet off the jib. At two 'he was compelled to get a second reef aft; and by half-past two he had put a balance-reef in the sail, and was lying-to.

"I can't say but the boat behaves well, Sergeant," the old sailor added, "but it blows forty-two pounders. I had no idea there were any such currents of air up here on this bit of fresh water, though I care not the knotting of a yarn for it, as your lake has now somewhat of a natural look; and if this d—d water had a savor of salt about it, one might be comfortable."

"How long have you been heading in this direction, brother Cap?" inquired the prudent soldier; "and at what rate may we be going through the water?"

"Why, two or three hours, mayhap, and she went like a horse for the first pair of them. Oh, we've a fine offing now! for to own the truth, little relishing the neighborhood of them said islands, although they are to windward, I took the helm myself, and run her off free for some league or two. We are well to leeward of them, I'll engage—I say to leeward; for though one might wish to be well to windward of one island, or even half a dozen, when it comes to a thousand, the better way is to give it up at

once, and to slide down under their lee as fast as possible. No, no; there they are up yonder in the dingle; and there they may stay, for anything Charles Cap cares."

"As the north shore lies only some five or six leagues from us, brother, and I know there is a large bay in that quarter, might it not be well to consult some of the crew concerning our position, if, indeed, we do not call up Jasper Eau-douce, and tell him to carry us back to Oswego? For it is quite impossible we should ever reach the station with this wind directly in our teeth."

"There are several serious professional reasons, Sergeant, against all your propositions. In the first place, an admission of ignorance on the part of a commander would destroy discipline. No matter, brother; I understand your shake of the head, but nothing capsizes discipline so much as to confess ignorance. I once knew a master of a vessel who went a week on a wrong course rather than allow he had made a mistake; and it was surprising how much he rose in the opinions of his people, just because they could not understand him."

"That may do on salt water, brother Cap, but it will hardly do on fresh. Rather than wreck my command on the Canada shore, I shall feel it a duty to take Jasper out of arrest."

"And make a haven in Frontenac. No, Sergeant; the *Scud* is in good hands, and will now learn something of seamanship."

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## CHAPTER X

As the day advanced, that portion of the inmates of the vessel which had the liberty of doing so appeared on deck. As yet the sea was not very high, from which it was inferred that the cutter was still under the lee of the islands; but it was apparent to all who understood the lake that they were about to experience one of the heavy autumnal gales of that region. Land was nowhere visible; and the horizon on every side exhibited that gloomy void, which lends to all views on vast bodies of water the sublimity of mystery. The swells, or, as landsmen term them, the waves, were short and curling, breaking of necessity sooner than the longer seas of the ocean; while the element itself, instead of presenting that beautiful hue which rivals the deep

tint of the southern sky, looked green and angry, though wanting in the lustre that is derived from the rays of the sun.

The soldiers were soon satisfied with the prospect, and one by one they disappeared, until none were left on deck but the crew, the Sergeant, Cap, Pathfinder, the Quartermaster, and Mabel. There was a shade on the brow of the last, who had been made acquainted with the real state of things, and who had fruitlessly ventured an appeal in favor of Jasper's restoration to the command. A night's rest and a night's reflection appeared also to have confirmed the Pathfinder in his opinion of the young man's innocence; and he, too, had made a warm appeal on behalf of his friend, though with the same want of success.

Several hours passed away, the wind gradually getting heavier and the sea rising, until the motion of the cutter compelled Mabel and the Quartermaster to retreat also. Cap swore several times; and it was now evident that the *Scud* was drifting into the broader and deeper parts of the lake, the seas raging down upon her in a way that none but a vessel of superior mould and build could have long ridden and withstood. All this, however, gave Cap no uneasiness; but, like the hunter that pricks his ears at the sound of the horn, or the war-horse that paws and snorts with pleasure at the roll of the drum, the whole scene awakened all that was man within him; and instead of the captious, supercilious, and dogmatic critic, quarrelling with trifles and exaggerating immaterial things, he began to exhibit the qualities of the hardy and experienced seaman which he truly was. The hands soon imbibed a respect for his skill; and, though they wondered at the disappearance of their old commander and the pilot, for which no reason had been publicly given, they soon yielded an implicit and cheerful obedience to the new one.

"This bit of fresh water, after all, brother Dunham, has some spirit, I find," cried Cap about noon, rubbing his hands in pure satisfaction at finding himself once more wrestling with the elements. "The wind seems to be an honest old-fashioned gale, and the seas have a fanciful resemblance to those of the Gulf Stream. I like this, Sergeant, I like this, and shall get to respect your lake, if it hold out twenty-four hours longer in the fashion in which it has begun."



"Land, ho!" shouted the man who was stationed on the forecastle.

Cap hurried forward; and there, sure enough, the land was visible through the drizzle, at the distance of about half a mile, the cutter heading directly towards it. The first impulse of the old seaman was to give an order to "stand by, to ware off shore;" but the cool-headed soldier restrained him.

"By going a little nearer," said the Sergeant, "some of us may recognize the place. Most of us know the American shore in this part of the lake; and it will be something gained to learn our position."

"Very true, very true; if, indeed, there is any chance of that we will hold on. What is this off here, a little on our weather-bow? It looks like a low headland."

"The garrison, by Jove!" exclaimed the other, whose trained eye sooner recognized the military outlines than the less instructed senses of his connection.

The Sergeant was not mistaken. There was the fort, sure enough, though it looked dim and indistinct through the fine rain, as if it were seen in the dusk of evening or the haze of morning. The low, sodded, and verdant ramparts, the sombre palisades, now darker than ever with water, the roof of a house or two the tall, solitary flagstaff, with its halyards blown steadily out into a curve that appeared traced in immovable lines in the air, were all soon to be seen, though no sign of animated life could be discovered. Even the sentinel was housed; and at first it was believed that no eye would detect the presence of their own vessel. But the unceasing vigilance of a border garrison did not slumber: one of the look-outs probably made the interesting discovery; a man or two were seen on some elevated stands, and then the entire ramparts next the lake were dotted with human beings.

The whole scene was one in which sublimity was singularly relieved by the picturesque. The raging of the tempest had a character of duration that rendered it easy to imagine it might be a permanent feature of the spot. The roar of the wind was without intermission, and the raging water answered to its dull but grand strains with hissing spray, a menacing wash, and sullen surges. The drizzle made a medium for the eye which closely resembled that of a thin mist, softening and rendering mysterious the images it revealed, while the genial feeling that is apt to ac-

company a gale of wind on water contributed to aid the milder influences of the moment. The dark interminable forest hove up out of the obscurity, grand, sombre, and impressive, while the solitary, peculiar, and picturesque glimpses of life that were caught in and about the fort, formed a refuge for the eye to retreat to when oppressed with the more imposing objects of nature.

"They see us," said the Sergeant, "and think we have returned on account of the gale, and have fallen to leeward of the port. Yes, there is Major Duncan himself on the north-eastern bastion; I know him by his height, and by the officers around him."

"Sergeant, it would be worth standing a little jeering, if we could fetch into the river, and come safely to an anchor. In that case, too, we might land this Master Eau-douce, and purify the boat."

"It would indeed; but, as poor a sailor as I am, I well know it cannot be done. Nothing that sails the lake can turn to windward against this gale; and there is no anchorage outside in weather like this."

"I know it, I see it, Sergeant; and pleasant as is that sight to you landsmen, we must leave it. For myself, I am never so happy in heavy weather as when I am certain that the land is behind me."

It was one in the morning when the storm-staysail was again got on the *Scud*, the head of the mainsail lowered, and the cutter put before the wind. Although the canvas now exposed was merely a rag in surface, the little craft nobly justified the use of the name she bore. For eight hours did she scud in truth; and it was almost with the velocity of the gulls that wheeled wildly over her in the tempest, apparently afraid to alight in the boiling caldron of the lake. The dawn of day brought little change; for no other horizon became visible than the little circle of drizzling sky and water already described, in which it seemed as if the elements were rioting in a sort of chaotic confusion. During this time the crew and passengers of the cutter were of necessity passive. Jasper and the pilot remained below; but, the motion of the vessel having become easier, nearly all the rest were on deck. The morning meal had been taken in silence, and eye met eye, as if their owners asked each other, in dumb show, what was to be the end of this strife in the elements. Cap, however, was perfectly composed, and his face brightened, his step

grew firmer, and his whole air more assured, as the storm increased, making larger demands on his professional skill and personal spirit. He stood on the forecastle, his arms crossed, balancing his body with a seaman's instinct, while his eyes watched the caps of the seas, as they broke and glanced past the reeling cutter, itself in such swift motion, as if they were the scud flying athwart the sky. At this sublime instant one of the hands gave the unexpected cry of "A sail!"

There was so much of the wild and solitary character of the wilderness about Ontario, that one scarcely expected to meet with a vessel on its waters. The *Scud* herself, to those who were in her, resembled a man threading the forest alone, and the meeting was like that of two solitary hunters beneath the broad canopy of leaves that then covered so many millions of acres on the continent of America. The peculiar state of the weather served to increase the romantic, almost supernatural appearance of the passage. Cap alone regarded it with practised eyes, and even he felt his iron nerves thrill under the sensations that were awakened by the wild features of the scene.

The strange vessel was about two cables' length ahead of the *Scud*, standing by the wind athwart her bows, and steering a course to render it probable that the latter would pass within a few yards of her. She was a full-rigged ship; and, seen through the misty medium of the tempest, the most experienced eye could detect no imperfection in her gear or construction. The only canvas she had set was a close-reefed main-topsail, and two small storm-staysails, one forward and the other aft. Still the power of the wind pressed so hard upon her as to bear her down nearly to her beam-ends, whenever the hull was not righted by the buoyancy of some wave under her lee. Her spars were all in their places, and by her motion through the water, which might have equalled four knots in the hour, it was apparent that she steered a little free.

"The fellow must know his position well," said Cap, as the cutter flew down towards the ship with a velocity almost equalling that of the gale, "for he is standing boldly to the southward, where he expects to find anchorage or a haven. No man in his senses would run off free in that fashion, that was not driven to scudding, like ourselves, who did not perfectly understand where he was going."

"We have made an awful run, captain," returned the

man to whom this remark had been addressed. "That is the French king's ship, Lee-my-calm (*Le Montcalm*), and she is standing in for the Niagara, where her owner has a garrison and a port. We've made an awful run of it!"

"Ay, bad luck to him! Frenchman-like, he skulks into port the moment he sees an English bottom."

"It might be well for us if we could follow him," returned the man, shaking his head despondingly, "for we are getting into the end of a bay up here at the head of the lake, and it is uncertain whether we ever get out of it again!"

"Pooh, man, pooh! We have plenty of sea-room, and a good English hull beneath us. We are no Johnny Crapauds to hide ourselves behind a point or a fort on account of a puff of wind. Mind your helm, sir!"

The order was given on account of the menacing appearance of the approaching passage. The *Scud* was now heading directly for the fore-foot of the Frenchman; and, the distance between the two vessels having diminished to a hundred yards, it was momentarily questionable if there was room to pass.

"Port, sir, port," shouted Cap. "Port your helm and pass astern!"

The crew of the Frenchman were seen assembling to windward, and a few muskets were pointed, as if to order the people of the *Scud* to keep off. Gesticulations were observed, but the sea was too wild and menacing to admit of the ordinary expedients of war. The water was dripping from the muzzles of two or three light guns on board the ship, but no one thought of loosening them for service in such a tempest. Her black sides, as they emerged from a wave, glistened and seemed to frown; but the wind howled through her rigging, whistling the thousand notes of a ship; and the hails and cries that escape a Frenchman with so much readiness were inaudible.

"Let him halloo himself hoarse!" growled Cap. "This is no weather to whisper secrets in. Port, sir, port!"

The man at the helm obeyed, and the next send of the sea drove the *Scud* down upon the quarter of the ship, so near her that the old mariner himself recoiled a step, in a vague expectation that, at the next surge ahead, she would drive bows foremost directly into the planks of the other vessel. But this was not to be: rising from the crouching posture she had taken, like a panther about to leap, the



cutter dashed onward, and at the next instant she was glancing past the stern of her enemy, just clearing the end of her spanker-boom with her own lower yard.

The young Frenchman who commanded the *Montcalm* leaped on the taffrail; and, with that high-toned courtesy which relieves even the worst acts of his countryman, he raised his cap and smiled a salutation as the *Scud* shot past. There were *bonhomie* and good taste in this act of courtesy, when circumstances allowed of no other communications; but they were lost on Cap, who, with an instinct quite as true to his race, shook his fist menacingly, and muttered to himself,—

“Ay, ay, it’s d—d lucky for you I’ve no armament on board here, or I’d send you in to get new cabin-windows fitted. Sergeant, he’s a humbug.”

“’Twas civil, brother Cap,” returned the other, lowering his hand from the military salute which his pride as a soldier had induced him to return,—“’twas civil, and that’s as much as you can expect from a Frenchman. What he really meant by it no one can say.”

“He is not heading up to this sea without an object, neither. Well, let him run in, if he can get there; we will keep the lake, like hearty English mariners.”

This sounded glorious, but Cap eyed with envy the glittering black mass of the *Montcalm*’s, hull, her waving topsail, and the misty tracery of her spars, as she grew less and less distinct, and finally disappeared in the drizzle, in a form as shadowy as that of some unreal image. Gladly would he have followed in her wake had he dared; for, to own the truth, the prospect of another stormy night in the midst of the wild waters that were raging around him brought little consolation. Still he had too much professional pride to betray his uneasiness, and those under his care relied on his knowledge and resources, with the implicit and blind confidence that the ignorant are apt to feel.

During this night Cap slept soundly, and for several hours. The day was just dawning when he felt himself shaken by the shoulder; and arousing himself, he found the Pathfinder standing at his side. During the gale the guide had appeared little on deck, for his natural modesty told him that seamen alone should interfere with the management of the vessel; and he was willing to show the same reliance on those who had charge of the *Scud*, as he expected those who followed through the forest to mani-

fest in his own skill; but he now thought himself justified in interfering, which he did in his own unsophisticated and peculiar manner.

"Sleep is sweet, Master Cap," said he, as soon as the eyes of the latter were fairly open, and his consciousness had sufficiently returned,—“sleep is sweet, as I know from experience, but life is sweeter still. Look about you, and say if this is exactly the moment for a commander to be off his feet.”

“How now? how now, Master Pathfinder?” growled Cap, in the first moments of his awakened faculties. “Are you, too, getting on the side of the grumblers? When ashore I admired your sagacity in running through the worst shoals without a compass; and since we have been afloat, your meekness and submission have been as pleasant as your confidence on your own ground. I little expected such a summons from you.”

“As for myself, Master Cap, I feel I have my gifts, and I believe they’ll interfere with those of no other man; but the case may be different with Mabel Dunham. She has her gifts, too, it is true; but they are not rude like ours, but gentle and womanish, as they ought to be. It’s on her account that I speak, and not on my own.”

“Ay, ay, I begin to understand. The girl is a good girl, my worthy friend; but she is a soldier’s daughter and a sailor’s niece, and ought not to be too tame or too tender in a gale. Does she show any fear?”

“Not she! not she! Mabel is a woman, but she is reasonable and silent. Not a word have I heard from her concerning our doings; though I do think, Master Cap, she would like it better if Jasper Eau-douce were put into his proper place, and things were restored to their old situation, like. This is human nature.”

“I’ll warrant it—girl-like, and Dunham-like, too. Anything is better than an old uncle, and everybody knows more than an old seaman. How this gale holds out! It blows as hard at this moment as if Boreas had just clapped his hand upon the bellows. And what is all this to leeward?” (rubbing his eyes)—“land! as sure as my name is Cap—and high land, too.”

The Pathfinder made no immediate answer; but, shaking his head, he watched the expression of his companion’s face, with a look of strong anxiety in his own.

“Land, as certain as this is the *Scud!*” repeated Cap;

"a lee shore, and that, too, within a league of us, with as pretty a line of breakers as one could find on the beach of all Long Island!"

"And is that encouraging? or is it disheartening?" inquired the Pathfinder.

"Ha! encouraging—disheartening!—why, neither. No, no, there is nothing encouraging about it; and as for disheartening, nothing ought to dishearten a seaman. You never get disheartened or afraid in the woods, my friend?"

"I'll not say that, I'll not say that. When the danger is great, it is my gift to see it, and know it, and to try to avoid it; else would my scalp long since have been drying in a Mingo wigwam. On this lake, however, I can see no trail, and I feel it my duty to submit; though I think we ought to remember there is such a person as Mabel Dunham on board. But here comes her father, and he will naturally feel for his own child."

"We are seriously situated, I believe, brother Cap," said the Sergeant, when he had reached the spot, "by what I can gather from the two hands on the forecastle? They tell me the cutter cannot carry any more sail, and her drift is so great we shall go ashore in an hour or two. I hope their fears have deceived them?"

Cap made no reply; but he gazed at the land with a rueful face, and then looked to windward with an expression of ferocity, as if he would gladly have quarrelled with the weather.

"It may be well, brother," the Sergeant continued, "to send for Jasper and consult him as to what is to be done. There are no French here to dread; and, under all circumstances, the boy will save us from drowning if possible."

"Ay, ay, 'tis these cursed circumstances that have done all the mischief. But let the fellow come; let him come; a few well-managed questions will bring the truth out of him, I'll warrant you."

This acquiescence on the part of the dogmatical Cap was no sooner obtained, than Jasper was sent for. The young man instantly made his appearance, his whole air, countenance, and mien expressive of mortification, humility, and, as his observers fancied, rebuked deception. When he first stepped on deck, Jasper cast one hurried, anxious glance around, as if curious to know the situation of the cutter; and that glance sufficed, it would seem, to let him into the secret of all her perils. At first he looked to windward,

as is usual with every seaman; then he turned round the horizon, until his eye caught a view of the high lands to leeward, when the whole truth burst upon him at once.

"I've sent for you, Master Jasper," said Cap, folding his arms, and balancing his body with the dignity of the fore-castle, "in order to learn something about the haven to leeward. We take it for granted you do not bear malice so hard as to wish to drown us all, especially the women; and I suppose you will be man enough to help us run the cutter into some safe berth until this bit of a gale has done blowing!"

"I would die myself rather than harm should come to Mabel Dunham," the young man earnestly answered.

"I knew it! I knew it!" cried the Pathfinder, clapping his hand kindly on Jasper's shoulder. "The lad is as true as the best compass that ever ran a boundary, or brought a man off from a blind trail. It is a mortal sin to believe otherwise."

"Humph!" ejaculated Cap; "especially the women! As if *they* were in any particular danger. Never mind, young man; we shall understand each other by talking like two plain seamen. Do you know of any port under our lee?"

"None. There is a large bay at this end of the lake; but it is unknown to us all, and not easy of entrance."

"And this coast to leeward—it has nothing particular to recommend it, I suppose?"

"It is a wilderness until you reach the mouth of the Niagara in one direction, and Frontenac in the other. North and west, they tell me, there is nothing but forest and prairies for a thousand miles."

"Thank God! then, there can be no French. Are there many savages, hereaway, on the land?"

"The Indians are to be found in all directions; though they are nowhere very numerous. By accident, we might find a party at any point on the shore; or we might pass months there without seeing one."

"We must take our chance, then, as to the blackguards; but, to be frank with you, Master Western, if this little unpleasant matter about the French had not come to pass, what would you now do with the cutter?"

"I am a much younger sailor than yourself, Master Cap," said Jasper modestly, "and am hardly fitted to advise you."

"Ay, ay, we all know that. In a common case, perhaps not. But this is an uncommon case, and a circumstance;



and on this bit of fresh water it has what may be called its peculiarities; and so, everything considered, you may be fitted to advise even your own father. At all events, you can speak, and I can judge of your opinions, agreeably to my own experience."

"I think, sir, before two hours are over, the cutter will have to anchor."

"Anchor!—not out here in the lake?"

"No, sir; but in yonder, near the land."

"You do not mean to say, Master Eau-douce, you would anchor on a lee shore in a gale of wind?"

"If I would save my vessel, that is exactly what I would do, Master Cap."

"Whe—e—e—w!—this is fresh water, with a vengeance! Hark'e young man, I've been a seafaring animal, boy and man, forty-one years, and I never yet heard of such a thing. I'd throw my ground-tackle overboard before I would be guilty of so lubberly an act!"

"That is what we do on this lake" modestly replied Jasper, "when we are hard pressed. I daresay we might do better, had we been better taught."

"That you might, indeed! No; no man induces me to commit such a sin against my own bringing up. I should never dare show my face inside of Sandy Hook again, had I committed so know-nothing an exploit. Why, Pathfinder, here, has more seamanship in him than that comes to. You can go below again, Master Eau-douce."

Jasper quietly bowed and withdrew; still, as he passed down the ladder, the spectators observed that he cast a lingering anxious look at the horizon to windward and the land to leeward, and then disappeared with concern strongly expressed in every lineament of his face.

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## CHAPTER XI

As the soldier's wife was sick in her berth, Mabel Dunham was the only person in the outer cabin when Jasper returned to it; for, by an act of grace in the Sergeant, he had been permitted to resume his proper place in this part of the vessel. We should be ascribing too much simplicity of character to our heroine, if we said that she had felt no distrust of the young man in consequence of his arrest;

but we should also be doing injustice to her warmth of feeling and generosity of disposition, if we did not add, that this distrust was insignificant and transient. As he now took his seat near her, his whole countenance clouded with the uneasiness he felt concerning the situation of the cutter, everything like suspicion was banished from her mind, and she saw in him only an injured man.

"You let this affair weigh too heavily on your mind, Jasper," said she eagerly, or with that forgetfulness of self with which the youthful of her sex are wont to betray their feelings when a strong and generous interest has attained the ascendancy; "no one who knows you can, or does, believe you guilty. Pathfinder says he will pledge his life for you."

"Then you, Mabel," returned the youth, his eyes flashing fire, "do not look upon me as the traitor your father seems to believe me to be?"

"My dear father is a soldier, and is obliged to act as one. My father's daughter is not, and will think of you as she ought to think of a man who has done so much to serve her already."

"Mabel, I'm not used to talking with one like you, or saying all I think and feel with any. I never had a sister, and my mother died when I was a child, so that I know little what your sex most likes to hear——"

Mabel would have given the world to know what lay behind the teeming word at which Jasper hesitated; but the indefinable and controlling sense of womanly diffidence made her suppress her curiosity. She waited in silence for him to explain his own meaning.

"I wish to say, Mabel," the young man continued, after a pause which he found sufficiently embarrassing, "that I am unused to the ways and opinions of one like you, and that you must imagine all I would add."

Mabel had imagination enough to fancy anything, but there are ideas and feelings that her sex prefer to have expressed before they yield them all their own sympathies, and she had a vague consciousness that these of Jasper might properly be enumerated in the class. With a readiness that belonged to her sex, therefore, she preferred changing the discourse to permitting it to proceed any further in a manner so awkward and so unsatisfactory.

"Tell me one thing, Jasper, and I shall be content," said she, speaking now with a firmness which denoted confi-

dence, not only in herself, but in her companion: "you do not deserve this cruel suspicion which rests upon you?"

"I do not, Mabel!" answered Jasper, looking into her full blue eyes with an openness and simplicity that might have shaken stronger distrust. "As I hope for mercy hereafter, I do not!"

"I knew it—I could have sworn it!" returned the girl warmly. "And yet my father means well;—but do not let this matter disturb you, Jasper."

"There is so much more to apprehend from another quarter just now, that I scarcely think of it."

"Jasper!"

"I do not wish to alarm you, Mabel; but if your uncle could be persuaded to change his notions about handling the *Scud*: and yet he is so much more experienced than I am, that he ought, perhaps, to place more reliance on his own judgment than on mine."

"Do you think the cutter in any danger?" demanded Mabel, quick as thought.

"I fear so; at least she would have been thought in great danger by us of the lake; perhaps an old seaman of the ocean may have means of his own to take care of her."

"Jasper, all agree in giving you credit for skill in managing the *Scud*. You know the lake, you know the cutter; you *must* be the best judge of our real situation."

"My concern for you, Mabel, may make me more cowardly than common; but, to be frank, I see but one method of keeping the cutter from being wrecked in the course of the next two or three hours, and that your uncle refused to take. After all, this may be my ignorance; for, as he says, Ontario is merely fresh water."

"You cannot believe this will make any difference. Think of my dear father, Jasper! Think of yourself; of all the lives that depend on a timely word from you to save them."

"I think of you, Mabel, and that is more, much more, than all the rest put together!" returned the young man, with a strength of expression and an earnestness of look that uttered infinitely more than the words themselves.

Mabel's heart beat quickly, and a gleam of grateful satisfaction shot across her blushing features; but the alarm was too vivid and too serious to admit of much relief from happier thoughts. She did not attempt to repress a look

of gratitude, and then she returned to the feeling which was naturally uppermost.

"My uncle's obstinacy must not be permitted to occasion this disaster. Go once more on deck, Jasper; and ask my father to come into the cabin."

While the young man was complying with this request, Mabel sat listening to the howling of the storm and the dashing of the water against the cutter, in a dread to which she had hitherto been a stranger. Constitutionally an excellent sailor, as the term is used among passengers, she had not hitherto bethought her of any danger, and had passed her time since the commencement of the gale in such womanly employments as her situation allowed; but now that alarm was seriously awakened, she did not fail to perceive that never before had she been on the water in such a tempest. The minute or two which elapsed before the Sergeant came appeared an hour, and she scarcely breathed when she saw him and Jasper descending the ladder in company. Quick as language could express her meaning, she acquainted her father with Jasper's opinion of their situation; and entreated him, if he loved her, or had any regard for his own life, or for those of his men, to interfere with her uncle, and to induce him to yield the control of the cutter again to its proper commander.

"Jasper is true, father," added she earnestly; "and if false, he could have no motive in wrecking us in this distant part of the lake at the risk of all our lives, his own included. I will pledge my own life for his truth."

"Ay, this is well enough for a young woman who is frightened," answered the more phlegmatic parent; "but it might not be so excusable in one in command of an expedition. Jasper may think the chance of drowning in getting ashore fully repaid by the chance of escaping as soon as he reaches the land."

"Sergeant Dunham!"

"Father!"

These exclamations were made simultaneously, but they were uttered in tones expressive of different feelings. In Jasper, surprise was the emotion uppermost; in Mabel, reproach. The old soldier, however, was too much accustomed to deal frankly with subordinates to heed either; and after a moment's thought, he continued as if neither had spoken. "Nor is brother Cap a man likely to submit to be taught his duty on board a vessel."



"But, father, when all our lives are in the utmost jeopardy!"

"So much the worst. The fair-weather commander is no great matter; it is when things go wrong that the best officer shows himself in his true colors. Charles Cap will not be likely to quit the helm because the ship is in danger. Besides, Jasper Eau-douce, he says your proposal in itself has a suspicious air about it, and sounds more like treachery than reason."

"He may think so! but let him send for the pilot and hear his opinion. It is well known that I have not seen the man since yesterday evening."

"This does sound reasonably, and the experiment shall be tried. Follow me on deck then, that all may be honest and above-board."

Jasper obeyed, and so keen was the interest of Mabel, that she too ventured as far as the companion-way, where her garments were sufficiently protected against the violence of the wind and her person from the spray. Here maiden modesty induced her to remain, though an absorbed witness of what was passing.

The pilot soon appeared, and there was no mistaking the look of concern that he cast around at the scene as soon as he was in the open air. Some rumors of the situation of the *Scud* had found their way below, it is true; but in this instance rumor had lessened instead of magnifying the danger. He was allowed a few minutes to look about him, and then the question was put as to the course which he thought it prudent to follow.

"I see no means of saving the cutter but to anchor," he answered simply, and without hesitation.

"What! out here in the lake?" inquired Cap, as he had previously done of Jasper.

"No: but closer in; just at the outer line of the breakers."

The effect of this communication was to leave no doubt in the mind of Cap that there was a secret arrangement between her commander and the pilot to cast away the *Scud*; most probably with the hope of effecting their escape. He consequently treated the opinion of the latter with the indifference he had manifested towards that of the former.

"I tell you, brother Dunham," said he, in answer to the remonstrances of the Sergeant against his turning a deaf ear to this double representation, "that no seaman would give such an opinion honestly. To anchor on a lee shore

in a gale of wind would be an act of madness that I could never excuse to the underwriters, under any circumstances, so long as a rag can be set; but to anchor close to breakers would be insanity."

"His Majesty underwrites the *Scud*, brother, and I am responsible for the lives of my command. These men are better acquainted with Lake Ontario than we can possibly be, and I do think their telling the same tale entitles them to some credit."

"Uncle!" said Mabel earnestly; but a gesture from Jasper induced the girl to restrain her feelings.

"We are drifting down upon the breakers so rapidly," said the young man, "that little need be said on the subject. Half an hour must settle the matter, one way or the other; but I warn Master Cap that the surest-footed man among us will not be able to keep his feet an instant on the deck of this low craft, should she fairly get within them. Indeed, I make little doubt that we shall fill and founder before the second line of rollers is passed."

"And how would anchoring help the matter?" demanded Cap furiously, as if he felt that Jasper was responsible for the effects of the gale, as well as for the opinion he had just given.

"It would at least do no harm," Eau-douce mildly replied. "By bringing the cutter head to sea we should lessen her drift; and even if we dragged through the breakers, it would be with the least possible danger. I hope, Master Cap, you will allow the pilot and myself to *prepare* for anchoring, since the precaution may do good, and can do no harm."

"Overhaul your ranges, if you will, and get your anchors clear, with all my heart. We are now in a situation that cannot be much affected by anything of that sort. Sergeant, a word with you aft here, if you please."

Cap led his brother-in-law out of ear-shot; and then, with more of human feeling in his voice and manner than he was apt to exhibit, he opened his heart on the subject of their real situation.

"This is a melancholy affair for poor Mabel," said he, blowing his nose, and speaking with a slight tremor. "You and I, Sergeant, are old fellows, and used to being near death, if not to actually dying; our trades fit us for such scenes; but poor Mabel!—she is an affectionate and kind-hearted girl, and I had hoped to see her comfortably settled,

and a mother, before my time came. Well, well! we must take the bad with the good in every v'y'ge; and the only serious objection that an old seafaring man can with propriety make to such an event is, that it should happen on this bit of d—d fresh water."

Sergeant Dunham was a brave man, and had shown his spirit in scenes that looked much more appalling than this; but on all such occasions he had been able to act his part against his foes, while here he was pressed upon by an enemy whom he had no means of resisting. For himself he cared far less than for his daughter, feeling some of that self-reliance which seldom deserts a man of firmness who is in vigorous health, and who has been accustomed to personal exertions in moments of jeopardy; but as respects Mabel he saw no means of escape, and, with a father's fondness, he at once determined that, if either was doomed to perish, he and his daughter must perish together.

"Do you think this must come to pass?" he asked of Cap firmly, but with strong feeling.

"Twenty minutes will carry us into the breakers; and look for yourself, Sergeant: what chance will even the stoutest man among us have in that caldron to leeward?"

While the Sergeant and Cap were gazing at this scene in silence, Jasper and his people were actively engaged on the forecastle. No sooner had the young man received permission to resume his old employment, than, appealing to some of the soldiers for aid, he mustered five or six assistants, and set about in earnest the performance of a duty which had been too long delayed.

"Jasper," commenced his friend, the guide, "I have been of no use this morning, for my gifts are of little account, as you know, in a vessel like this; but, should it please God to let the Sergeant's daughter reach the shore alive, my acquaintance with the forest may still carry her through in safety to the garrison."

"'Tis a fearful distance thither, Pathfinder!" Mabel rejoined, the party being so near together that all which was said by one was overheard by the others. "I am afraid none of us could live to reach the fort."

"It would be a risky path, Mabel, and a crooked one; though some of your sex have undergone even more than that in this wilderness. But, Jasper, either you or I, or both of us, must man this bark canoe; Mabel's only chance will lie in getting through the breakers in that."

"I would willingly man anything to save Mabel," answered Jasper, with a melancholy smile; "but no human hand, Pathfinder, could carry that canoe through yonder breakers in a gale like this. I have hopes from anchoring, after all! for once before have we saved the *Scud* in an extremity nearly as great as this."

"If we are to anchor, Jasper," the Sergeant inquired, "why not do it at once? Every foot we lose in drifting now would come into the distance we shall probably drag when the anchors are let go."

Jasper drew nearer to the Sergeant, and took his hand, pressing it earnestly, and in a way to denote strong, almost uncontrollable feelings.

"Sergeant Dunham," said he solemnly, "you are a good man, though you have treated me harshly in this business. You love your daughter?"

"That you cannot doubt, Eau-douce," returned the Sergeant huskily.

"Will you give her—give us all—the only chance for life that is left?"

"What would you have me do, boy, what would you have me do? I have acted according to my judgment hitherto, —what would you have me do?"

"Support me against Master Cap for five minutes, and all that man can do towards saving the *Scud* shall be done."

The Sergeant hesitated, for he was too much of a disciplinarian to fly in the face of regular orders. He disliked the appearance of vacillation, too; and then he had a profound respect for his kinsman's seamanship. While he was deliberating, Cap came from the post he had some time occupied, which was at the side of the man at the helm, and drew nigh the group.

"Master Eau-douce," said he, as soon as near enough to be heard, "I have come to inquire if you know any spot near by where this cutter can be beached? The moment has arrived when we are driven to this hard alternative."

That instant of indecision on the part of Cap secured the triumph of Jasper. Looking at the Sergeant, the young man received a nod that assured him of all he asked, and he lost not one of those moments that were getting to be so very precious.

"Shall I take the helm," he inquired of Cap, "and see if we can reach a creek that lies to leeward?"

"Do so, do so," said the other, hemming to clear his



throat; for he felt oppressed by a responsibility that weighed all the heavier on his shoulders on account of his ignorance. "Do so, Eau-douce, since, to be frank with you, I can see nothing better to be done. We must beach or swamp."

Jasper required no more; springing aft, he soon had the tiller in his own hands. The pilot was prepared for what was to follow; and, at a sign from his young commander, the rag of sail that had so long been set was taken in. At that moment, Jasper, watching his time, put the helm up; the head of a staysail was loosened forward, and the light cutter, as if conscious she was now under the control of familiar hands, fell off, and was soon in the trough of the sea. In less than ten minutes from the moment when Jasper went to the helm, the *Scud* was riding, head to sea, with the two cables stretched ahead in lines that resembled bars of iron.

"This is not well done, Master Jasper!" angrily exclaimed Cap, as soon as he perceived the trick which had been played him; "this is not well done, sir. I order you to cut, and to beach the cutter without a moment's delay."

No one, however, seemed disposed to comply with this order; for so long as Eau-douce saw fit to command, his own people were disposed to obey. Finding that the men remained passive, Cap, who believed they were in the utmost peril, turned fiercely to Jasper, and renewed his remonstrances.

"You did not head for your pretended creek," added he, after dealing in some oburgatory remarks that we do not deem it necessary to record, "but steered for that bluff, where every soul on board would have been drowned, had we gone ashore."

"And you wish to cut, and put every soul ashore at that very spot!" Jasper retored, a little drily.

"Throw a lead-line overboard, and ascertain the drift!" Cap now roared to the people forward. A sign from Jasper sustaining this order, it was instantly obeyed. All on deck watched, with nearly breathless interest, the result of the experiment. The lead was no sooner on the bottom, than the line tended forward, and in about two minutes it was seen that the cutter had drifted her length dead in towards the bluff. Jasper looked gravely, for he well knew nothing would hold the vessel did she get within the vortex of the breakers, the first line of which was appearing

and disappearing about a cable's length directly under their stern.

"Traitor!" exclaimed Cap, shaking a finger at the young commander, though passion choked the rest. "You must answer for this with your life!" he added after a short pause. "If I were at the head of this expedition, Sergeant, I would hang him at the end of the main-boom, lest he escape drowning."

"Moderate your feelings, brother; be more moderate, I beseech you; Jasper appears to have done all for the best, and matters may not be so bad as you believe them."

"Why did he not run for the creek he mentioned?—why has he brought us here, dead to windward of that bluff, and to a spot where even the breakers are only of half the ordinary width, as if in a hurry to drown all on board?"

"I headed for the bluff, for the precise reason that the breakers are so narrow at this spot," answered Jasper mildly, though his gorge had risen at the language the other held.

"Do you mean to tell an old seaman like me that this cutter could live in those breakers?"

"I do not, sir. I think she would fill and swamp if driven into the first line of them! I am certain she would never reach the shore on her bottom, if fairly entered. I hope to keep her clear of them altogether."

Cap grumbled and swore; but, as there was no remedy, he was compelled to acquiesce.

Men are seldom inclined to quarrel with good fortune, but it is in distress that they grow clamorous and critical. Most on board were disposed to believe that they had been saved from shipwreck by the skill and knowledge of Jasper, without regarding the opinions of Cap, whose remarks were now little heeded.

There was half an hour of uncertainty and doubt, it is true, during which period the lead was anxiously watched; and then a feeling of security came over all, and the weary slept without dreaming of instant death.

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## CHAPTER XII

It was near noon when the gale broke; and then its force abated as suddenly as its violence had arisen. In less than

two hours after the wind fell, the surface of the lake, though still agitated, was no longer glittering with foam; and in double that time, the entire sheet presented the ordinary scene of disturbed water, that was unbroken by the violence of a tempest. Still the waves came rolling incessantly towards the shore, and the lines of breakers remained, though the spray had ceased to fly; the combing of the swells was more moderate, and all that there was of violence proceeded from the impulsion of wind which had abated.

As it was impossible to make head against the sea that was still up, with the light opposing air that blew from the eastward, all thoughts of getting under way that afternoon were abandoned. Jasper, who had now quietly resumed the command of the *Scud*, busied himself, however, in heaving-up the anchors, which were lifted in succession.

The party which was to land consisted of Sergeant Dunham, his daughter, and the Pathfinder. Accustomed to the canoe, Mabel took her seat in the centre with great steadiness, her father was placed in the bows, while the guide assumed the office of conductor, by steering in the stern. There was little need of impelling the canoe by means of the paddle, for the rollers sent it forward at moments with a violence that set every effort to govern its movements at defiance. More than once, before the shore was reached, Mabel repented of her temerity, but Pathfinder encouraged her, and really manifested so much self-possession, coolness, and strength of arm himself, that even a female might have hesitated about owning all her apprehensions. Our heroine was no coward; and while she felt the novelty of her situation, in landing through a surf, she also experienced a fair proportion of its wild delight. At moments, indeed, her heart was in her mouth, as the bubble of a boat floated on the very crest of a foaming breaker, appearing to skim the water like a swallow, and then she flushed and laughed, as, left by the glancing element, they appeared to linger behind as if ashamed of having been outdone in the headlong race. A few minutes sufficed for this excitement; for though the distance between the cutter and the land considerably exceeded a quarter of a mile, the intermediate space was passed in a very few minutes.

On landing, the Sergeant kissed his daughter kindly, for he was so much of a soldier as always to feel more at home

on *terra firma* than when afloat; and, taking his gun, he announced his intention to pass an hour in quest of game.

"Pathfinder will remain near you, girl, and no doubt he will tell you some of the tradition of this part of the world, or some of his own experiences with the Mingos."

The guide laughed, promised to have a care of Mabel, and in a few minutes the father had ascended a steep acclivity and disappeared in the forest. The others took another direction, which, after a few minutes of a sharp ascent also, brought them to a small naked point on the promontory, where the eye overlooked an extensive and very peculiar panorama. Here Mabel seated herself on a fragment of fallen rock to recover her breath and strength, while her companion, on whose sinews no personal exertion seemed to make any impression, stood at her side, leaning in his own and not ungraceful manner on his long rifle. Several minutes passed, and neither spoke; Mabel, in particular, being lost in admiration of the view.

"We are very far here from human habitations!" exclaimed Mabel, when, after a long survey of the scene, its principal peculiarities forced themselves on her active and ever brilliant imagination; "this is indeed being on a frontier."

"Have they more sightly scenes than this nearer the sea and around their large towns?" demanded Pathfinder, with an interest he was apt to discover in such a subject.

"I will not say that: there is more to remind one of his fellow-beings there than here; less, perhaps, to remind one of God."

"Ay, Mabel, that is what my own feelings say. I am but a poor hunter, I know, untaught and unlearned; but God is as near me, in this my home, as he is near the king in his royal palace."

"Who can doubt it?" returned Mabel, looking from the view up into the hard-featured but honest face of her companion, though not without surprise at the energy of his manner. "One feels nearer to God in such a spot, I think, than when the mind is distracted by the objects of the towns."

"You say all I wish to say myself, Mabel, but in so much plainer speech, that you make me ashamed of wishing to let others know what I feel on such matters. I have coasted this lake in search of skins afore the war, and have been here already; not at this very spot, for we landed yonder,



where you may see the blasted oak that stands above the cluster of hemlocks—”

“How, Pathfinder, can you remember all these trifles so accurately?”

“These are our streets and houses, our churches and palaces. Remember them, indeed! I once made an appointment with the Big Sarpent, to meet at twelve o’clock at noon, near the foot of a certain pine, at the end of six months, when neither of us was within three hundred miles of the spot. The tree stood, and stands still, unless the judgment of Providence has lighted on that too, in the midst of the forest, fifty miles from any settlement, but in a most extraordinary neighborhood for beaver.”

“And did you meet at that very spot and hour?”

“Does the sun rise and set? When I reached the tree, I found the Sarpent leaning against its trunk with torn leggings and muddled moccasins. The Delaware had got into a swamp, and it worried him not a little to find his way out of it; but as the sun which comes over the eastern hills in the morning goes down behind the western at night, so was he true to time and place. No fear of Chingachgook when there is either a friend or an enemy in the case. He is equally sartin with each.”

“And where is the Delaware now? why is he not with us to-day?”

“He is scouting on the Mingo trail, where I ought to have been too, but for a great human infirmity.”

“You seem above, beyond, superior to all infirmity, Pathfinder; I never yet met with a man who appeared to be so little liable to the weaknesses of nature.”

“If you mean in the way of health and strength, Mabel, Providence has been kind to me; though I fancy the open air, long hunts, active scoutings, forest fare, and the sleep of a good conscience, may always keep the doctors at a distance. But I am human after all; yes, I find I’m very human in some of my feelings.”

Mabel looked surprised, and it would be no more than delineating the character of her sex, if we added that her sweet countenance expressed a good deal of curiosity, too, though her tongue was more discreet.

“There is something bewitching in this wild life of yours, Pathfinder,” she exclaimed, a tinge of enthusiasm mantling her cheeks. “In find I’m fast getting to be a frontier girl, and am coming to love all this grand silence of the

woods. The towns seem tame to me; and, as my father will probably pass the remainder of his days here, where he has already lived so long, I begin to feel that I should be happy to continue with him, and not to return to the seashore."

"The woods are never silent, Mabel, to such as understand their meaning. Days at a time have I travelled them alone, without feeling the want of company; and, as for conversation, for such as can comprehend their language, there is no want of rational and instructive discourse."

"I believe you are happier when alone, Pathfinder, than when mingling with your fellow-creatures."

"I will not say that, I will not say exactly that. I have seen the time when I have thought that God was sufficient for me in the forest, and that I have craved no more than His bounty and His care. But other feelings have got uppermost, and I suppose nature will have its way. All other creatures mate, Mabel, and it was intended man should do so too."

"And have you never bethought you of seeking a wife, Pathfinder, to share your fortunes?" inquired the girl, with the directness and simplicity that the pure of heart and the undesigning are the most apt to manifest, and with that feeling of affection which is inbred in her sex. "To me it seems you only want a home to return to from your wanderings to render your life completely happy. Were I a man, it would be my delight to roam through these forests at will, or to sail over this beautiful lake."

"I understand you, Mabel; and God bless you for thinking of the welfare of men as humble as we are. We have our pleasures, it is true, as well as our gifts, but we might be happier; yes, I do think we might be happier."

"Happier! in what way, Pathfinder? In this pure air, with these cool and shaded forests to wander through, this lovely lake to gaze at and sail upon, with clear consciences, and abundance for all their real wants, men ought to be nothing less than as perfectly happy as their infirmities will allow."

"Every creature has its gifts, Mabel, and men have theirs," answered the guide, looking stealthily at his beautiful surroundings, that it to be seen in this vast solitude. "I am contented under the ardor of feelings excited by the novelty of her striking situation; and all must obey them. Do you

see yonder pigeon that is just alightin' on the beach—here in a line with the fallen chestnut?"

"Certainly; it is the only thing stirring with life in it, besides ourselves, that is to be seen in this vast solitude."

"Not so, Mabel, not so; Providence makes nothing that lives to live quite alone. Here is its mate, just rising on the wing; it has been feeding near the other beach, but it will not long be separated from its companion."

"I understand you, Pathfinder," returned Mabel, smiling sweetly, though as calmly as if the discourse was with her father. "But a hunter may find a mate, even in this wild region. The Indian girls are affectionate and true, I know; for such was the wife of Arrowhead, to a husband who oftener frowned than smiled."

"That would never do, Mabel, and good would never come of it. Kind must cling to kind, and country to country, if one would find happiness. If, indeed, I could meet with one like you, who would consent to be a hunter's wife, and who would not scorn my ignorance and rudeness, then, indeed, would all the toil of the past appear like the sporting of the young deer, and all the future like sunshine."

"One like me! A girl of my years and indiscretion would hardly make a fit companion for the boldest scout and surest hunter on the lines."

"Ah, Mabel! I fear me that I have been improving a red-skin's gifts with a pale-face's natur'? Such a character would insure a wife in an Indian village."

"Surely, surely, Pathfinder, you would not think of choosing one so ignorant, so frivolous, so vain, and so inexperienced as I for your wife?" Mabel would have added, "and as young;" but an instinctive feeling of delicacy repressed the words.

"And why not, Mabel? If you are ignorant of frontier usages, you know more than all of us of pleasant anecdotes and town customs: as for frivolous, I know not what it means; but if it signifies beauty, ah's me! I fear it is no fault in my eyes. Vain you are not, as is seen by the kind manner in which you listen to all my idle tales about scoutings and trails; and as for experience, that will come with years. Besides, Mabel, I fear men think little of these matters when they are about to take wives: I do."

"Pathfinder, your words,—your looks:—surely, all this is meant in trifling; you speak in pleasantry?"

"To me it is always agreeable to be near you, Mabel; and

I should sleep sounder this blessed night than I have done for a week past, could I think that you find such discourse as pleasant as I do."

"You and I should understand each other, Pathfinder," said she with an earnest sincerity; "nor should there be any cloud between us. You are too upright and frank to meet with anything but sincerity and frankness in return. Surely, surely, all this means nothing,—has no other connection with your feelings than such a friendship as one of your wisdom and character would naturally feel for a girl like me?"

"I believe it's all nat'ral, Mabel; yes, I do: the Sergeant tells me he had such feelings towards your own mother, and I think I've seen something like it in the young people I have from time to time guided through the wilderness. Yes, yes, I daresay it's all nat'ral enough, and that makes it come so easy, and is a great comfort to me."

"Pathfinder, your words make me uneasy. Speak plainer, or change the subject for ever. You do not, cannot mean that—you cannot wish me to understand"—even the tongue of the spirited Mabel faltered, and she shrank, with maiden shame, from adding what she wished so earnestly to say. Rallying her courage, however, and determined to know all as soon and as plainly as possible, after a moment's hesitation, she continued,—“I mean, Pathfinder, that you do not wish me to understand that you seriously think of me as a wife?"

"I do, Mabel; that's it, that's just it; and you have put the matter in a much better point of view than I with my forest gifts and frontier ways would ever be able to do. The Sergeant and I have concluded on the matter, if it is agreeable to you, as he thinks is likely to be the case; though I doubt my own power to please one who deserves the best husband America can produce."

Mabel's countenance changed from uneasiness to surprise; and then, by a transition still quicker, from surprise to pain.

"My father!" she exclaimed,—“my dear father has thought of my becoming your wife, Pathfinder?"

"Yes, he has, Mabel, he has, indeed. He has even thought such a thing might be agreeable to you, and has almost encouraged me to fancy it might be true."

"But you yourself,—you certainly can care nothing whether this singular expectation shall ever be realized or not?"



"Anan?"

"I mean, Pathfinder, that you have talked of this match more to oblige my father than anything else; that your feelings are no way concerned, let my answer be what it may?"

The scout looked earnestly into the beautiful face of Mabel, which had flushed with the ardor and novelty of her sensations, and it was not possible to mistake the intense admiration that betrayed itself in every lineament of his ingenuous countenance.

"I have often thought myself happy, Mabel, when ranging the woods on a successful hunt, breathing the pure air of the hills, and filled with vigor and health; but I now know that it has all been idleness and vanity compared with the delight it would give me to know that you thought better of me than you think of most others."

"Better of you!—I do, indeed, think better of you, Pathfinder, than of most others: I am not certain that I do not think better of you than of any other; for your truth, honesty, simplicity, justice, and courage are scarcely equalled by any of earth."

"Ah, Mabel, these are sweet and encouraging words from you! and the Sergeant, after all, was not so near wrong as I feared."

"Nay, Pathfinder, in the name of all that is sacred and just, do not let us misunderstand each other in a matter of so much importance. While I esteem, respect, nay, reverence you, almost as much as I reverence my own dear father, it is impossible that I should ever become your wife—that I—"

The change in her companion's countenance was so sudden and so great, that the moment the effect of what she had uttered became visible in the face of the Pathfinder, Mabel arrested her own words, notwithstanding her strong desire to be explicit, the reluctance with which she could at any time cause pain being sufficient of itself to induce the pause. Neither spoke for some time, the shade of disappointment that crossed the rugged lineaments of the hunter amounting so nearly to anguish as to frighten his companion, while the sensation of choking became so strong in the Pathfinder that he fairly griped his throat, like one who sought physical relief for physical suffering. The convulsive manner in which his fingers worked actually struck the alarmed girl with a feeling of awe.

"Nay, Pathfinder," Mabel eagerly added, the instant she

could command her voice,—“I may have said more than I mean; for all things of this nature are possible, and women, they say, are never sure of their own minds. What I wish you to understand is, that it is not likely that you and I should ever think of each other as man and wife ought to think of each other.”

“I do not—I shall never think in that way again, Mabel,” gasped forth the Pathfinder, who appeared to utter his words like one just raised above the pressure of some suffocating substance. “No, no, I shall never think of you, or any one else, again in that way.”

“Pathfinder, dear Pathfinder, understand me; do not attach more meaning to my words than I do myself: a match like that would be unwise, unnatural, perhaps.”

“Yes, unnat’ral—ag’in natur’; and so I told the Sergeant, but he *would* have it otherwise.”

“Pathfinder! oh, this is worse than I could have imagined! Take my hand, excellent Pathfinder, and let me see that you do not hate me. For God’s sake, smile upon me again.”

“Hate you, Mabel! Smile upon you! Ah’s me!”

“Nay, give me your hand; your hardy, true, and manly hand—both, both, Pathfinder! for I shall not be easy until I feel certain that we are friends again, and that all this has been a mistake.”

“Mabel!” said the guide, looking wistfully into the face of the generous and impetuous girl, as she held his two hard and sunburnt hands in her own pretty and delicate fingers, and laughing in his own silent and peculiar manner, while anguish gleamed over lineaments which seemed incapable of deception, even while agitated with emotions so conflicting,—“Mabel! the Sergeant was wrong.”

The pent-up feelings could endure no more, and the tears rolled down the cheeks of the scout like rain. His fingers again worked convulsively at his throat; and his breast heaved, as if it possessed a tenant of which it would be rid, by any effort, however desperate.

“Pathfinder! Pathfinder!” Mabel almost shrieked; “anything but this, anything but this! Speak to me, Pathfinder! smile again, say one kind word, anything to prove you can forgive me.”

“The Sergeant was wrong!” exclaimed the guide, laughing amid his agony, in a way to terrify his companion by the unnatural mixture of anguish and light-heartedness. “I

knew it, I knew it, and said it; yes, the Sergeant was wrong after all."

"We can be friends, though we cannot be man and wife," continued Mabel, almost as much disturbed as her companion, scarcely knowing what she said; "we can always be friends, and always will."

"I thought the Sergeant was mistaken," resumed the Pathfinder, when a great effort had enabled him to command himself, "for I did not think my gifts were such as would please the fancy of a town-bred girl. It would have been better, Mabel, had he not over-persuaded me into a different notion; and it might have been better, too, had you not been so pleasant and confiding like; yes, it would."

"If I thought any error of mine had raised false expectations in you, Pathfinder, however unintentionally on my part, I should never forgive myself, for, believe me, I would rather endure pain in my own feelings than you should suffer."

"That's just it, Mabel, that's just it. These speeches and opinions, spoken in so soft a voice, and in a way I'm so unused to in the woods, have done the mischief. But I now see plainly, and begin to understand the difference between us better, and will strive to keep down thought, and to go abroad again as I used to do, looking for the game and the inimy. Ah's me, Mabel! I have indeed been on a false trail since we met."

"In a little while you will forget all this, and think of me as a friend, who owes you her life."

"This may be the way in the towns, but I doubt if it's nat'ral to the woods. With us, when the eye sees a lovely sight, it is apt to keep it long in view, or when the mind takes in an upright and proper feeling, it is loath to part with it."

"You will forget it all, when you come seriously to recollect that I am altogether unsuited to be your wife."

"So I told the Sergeant; but he would have it otherwise. I knew you was too young and beautiful for one of middle age, like myself, and who never was comely to look at even in youth; and then your ways have not been my ways; nor would a hunter's cabin be a fitting place for one who was edicated among chiefs, as it were. If I were younger and comelier, though, like Jasper Eau-douce—"

"Never mind Jasper Eau-douce," interrupted Mabel impatiently; "we can talk of something else."

"Jasper is a worthy lad, Mabel; ay, and a comely," returned the guileless guide, looking earnestly at the girl, as if he distrusted her judgment in speaking slightly of his friend. "Were I only half as comely as Jasper Western, my misgivings in this affair would not have been so great, and they might not have been so true."

"We will not talk of Jasper Western," repeated Mabel, the color mounting to her temples; "he may be good enough in a gale, or on the lake, but he is not good enough to talk of here."

"I fear me, Mabel, he is better than the man who is likely to be your husband, though the Sergeant says that never can take place. But the Sergeant was wrong once, and he may be wrong twice."

"And who is likely to be my husband, Pathfinder! This is scarcely less strange than what has just passed between us."

"I know it is nat'ral for like to seek like, and for them that have consorted much with officers' ladies to wish to be officers' ladies themselves. But, Mabel, I may speak plainly to you, I know; and I hope my words will not give you pain; for, now I understand what it is to be disappointed in such feelings, I wouldn't wish to cause even a Mingo sorrow on this head. But happiness is not always to be found in a marquee, any more than in a tent; and though the officers' quarters may look more tempting than the rest of the barracks, there is often great misery between husband and wife inside of their doors."

"I do not doubt it in the least, Pathfinder; and, did it rest with me to decide, I would sooner follow you to some cabin in the woods, and share your fortune, whether it might be better or worse, than go inside the door of any officer I know, with an intention of remaining there as its master's wife."

"Mabel, this is not what Lundie hopes, or Lundie thinks."

"And what care I for Lundie? He is major of the 55th, and may command his men to wheel and march about as he pleases; but he cannot compel me to wed the greatest or the meanest of his mess. Besides, what can you know of Lundie's wishes on such a subject?"

"From Lundie's own mouth. The Sergeant had told him that he wished me for a son-in-law; and the Major, being an old and a true friend, conversed with me on the



subject. He put it to me plainly, whether it would not be more ginerous in me to let an officer succeed, than to strive to make you share a hunter's fortune. I owned the truth, I did; and that was, that I thought it might; but when he told me that the Quartermaster would be his choice, I would not abide by the conditions. No, no, Mabel; I know Davy Muir well, and though he may make you a lady, he can never make you a happy woman, or himself a gentleman."

"My father has been very wrong if he has said or done aught to cause you sorrow, Pathfinder; and so great is my respect for you, so sincere my friendship, that were it not for one—I mean that no person need fear Lieutenant Muir's influence with me—I would rather remain as I am to my dying day than become a lady at the cost of being his wife."

"I do not think you would say that which you do not feel, Mabel," returned Pathfinder earnestly.

"Not at such a moment, on such a subject, and least of all to you. No; Lieutenant Muir may find wives where he can—my name shall never be on his catalogue."

"Thank you, thank you for that, Mabel; for, though there is no longer any hope for me, I could never be happy were you to take to the Quartermaster. I feared the commission might count for something, I did; and I know the man. It is not jealousy that makes me speak in this manner, but truth, for I know the man. Now, were you to fancy a desarving youth, one like Jasper Western, for instance——"

"Why always mention Jasper Eau-douce, Pathfinder? he can have no concern with our friendship; let us talk of yourself, and of the manner in which you intend to pass the winter."

"Ah's me!—I'm little worth at the best, Mabel, unless it may be on a trail or with the rifle; and less worth now that I have discovered the Sergeant's mistake. There is no need, therefore, of talking of me. It has been very pleasant to me to be near you so long, and even to fancy that the Sergeant was right; but that is all over now. I shall go down the lake with Jasper, and then there will be business to occupy us, and that will keep useless thoughts out of the mind."

"And you will forget this—forget me—no, not forget me, either, Pathfinder; but you will resume your old pur-

suits; and cease to think a girl of sufficient importance to disturb your peace?"

"I never knowed it afore, Mabel; but girls are of more account in this life than I could have believed. Now, afore I knowed you, the new-born babe did not sleep more sweetly than I used; my head was no sooner on the root, or the stone, or mayhap on the skin, than all was lost to the senses, unless it might be to go over in the night the business of the day in a dream like; and there I lay till the moment came to be stirring, and the swallows were not more certain to be on the wing with the light, than I to be afoot at the moment I wished to be. All this seemed a gift, and might be calculated on even in the midst of a Mingo camp; for I've been outlying in my time, in the very villages of the vagabonds."

"And all this will return to you, Pathfinder, for one so upright and sincere will never waste his happiness on a mere fancy. You will dream again of your hunts, of the deer you have slain, and of the beaver you have taken."

"Ah's me, Mabel, I wish never to dream again! Before we met, I had a sort of pleasure in following up the hounds, in fancy, as it might be; and even in striking a trail of the Iroquois—nay, I've been in skrimmages and ambushments, in thought like, and found satisfaction in it, according to my gifts; but all those things have lost their charms since I've made acquaintance with you. Now, I think no longer of anything rude in my dreams; but the very last night we stayed in the garrison I imagined I had a cabin in a grove of sugar maples, and at the root of every tree was a Mabel Dunham, while the birds among the branches sang ballads instead of the notes that natur' gave, and even the deer stopped to listen. I tried to shoot a fa'n, but Killdeer missed fire, and the creatur' laughed in my face, as pleasantly as a young girl laughs in her merriment, and then it bounded away, looking back as if expecting me to follow."

"No more of this, Pathfinder; we'll talk no more of these things," said Mabel, dashing the tears from her eyes: for the simple, earnest manner in which this hardy woodsman betrayed the deep hold she had taken of his feelings nearly proved too much for her own generous heart. "Now, let us look for my father; he cannot be distant, as I heard his gun quite near."

"The Sergeant was wrong—yes, he was wrong, and it's

of no avail to attempt to make the dove consort with the wolf."

"Here comes my dear father," interrupted Mabel. "Let us look cheerful and happy, Pathfinder, as such good friends ought to look, and keep each other's secrets."

A pause succeeded; the Sergeant's foot was heard crushing the dried twigs hard by, and then his form appeared shoving aside the bushes of a copse just near. As he issued into the open ground, the old soldier scrutinized his daughter and her companion, and speaking good-naturedly, he said, "Mabel, child, you are young and light of foot—look for a bird that I've shot that fell just beyond the thicket of young hemlocks on the shore; and, as Jasper is showing signs of an intention of getting under way, you need not take the trouble to clamber up this hill again, but we will meet you on the beach in a few minutes."

Mabel obeyed, bounding down the hill with the elastic step of youth and health. But, notwithstanding the lightness of her steps, the heart of the girl was heavy, and no sooner was she hid from observation by the thicket, than she threw herself on the root of a tree and wept as if her heart would break. The Sergeant watched her until she disappeared, with a father's pride, and then turned to his companion with a smile as kind and as familiar as his habits would allow him to use towards any.

"She has her mother's lightness and activity, my friend, with somewhat of her father's force," said he. "Her mother was not quite so handsome, I think myself; but the Dunhams were always thought comely, whether men or women. Well, Pathfinder, I take it for granted you've not overlooked the opportunity, but have spoken plainly to the girl? women like frankness in matters of this sort."

"I believe Mabel and I understand each other at last, Sergeant," returned the other, looking another way to avoid the soldier's face.

"So much the better. Some people fancy that a little doubt and uncertainty makes love all the livelier; but I am one of those who think the plainer the tongue speaks the easier the mind will comprehend. Was Mabel surprised?"

"I fear she was, Sergeant; I fear she was taken quite by surprise—yes, I do."

"Well, well, surprises in love are like an ambush in war, and quite as lawful; though it is not so easy to tell when

a woman is surprised, as to tell when it happens to an enemy. Mabel did not run away, my worthy friend, did she?"

"No, Sergeant, Mabel did not try to escape; *that* I can say with a clear conscience."

"I hope the girl was not too willing, neither! Her mother was shy and coy for a month, at least; but frankness, after all, is a recommendation in a man or woman."

"That it is, that it is; and judgment, too."

"You are not to look for too much judgment in a young creature of twenty, Pathfinder, but it will come with experience. A mistake in you or me, for instance, might not be so easily overlooked; but in a girl of Mabel's years, one is not to strain at a gnat lest they swallow a camel."

The muscles of the listener's face twitched as the Sergeant was thus delivering his sentiments, though the former had now recovered a portion of that stoicism which formed so large a part of his character, and which he had probably imbibed from long association with the Indians. His eyes rose and fell, and once a gleam shot athwart his hard features as if he were about to indulge in his peculiar laugh; but the joyous feeling, if it really existed, was as quickly lost in a look allied to anguish.

"You say true, Sergeant," Pathfinder answered; "a mistake in one like you is a more serious matter."

"You will find Mabel sincere and honest in the end; give her but a little time."

"Ah's me, Sergeant!"

"A man of your merits would make an impression on a rock, give him time, Pathfinder."

"Sergeant Dunham, we are old fellow-campaigners—that is, as campaigns are carried on here in the wilderness; and we have done so many kind acts to each other that we can afford to be candid—what has caused you to believe that a girl like Mabel could ever fancy one so rude as I am?"

"What?—why, a variety of reasons, and good reasons too, my friend. Those same acts of kindness, perhaps, and the campaigns you mention; moreover, you are my sworn and tried comrade."

"All this sounds well, so far as you and I are consarned; but they do not touch the case of your pretty daughter. She may think these very campaigns have destroyed the little comeliness I may once have had; and I am not quite sartain that being an old friend of her father would lead any young maiden's mind into a particular affection for a



suitors. Like loves like, I tell you, Sergeant; and my gifts are not altogether the gifts of Mabel Dunham."

"These are some of your old modest qualms, Pathfinder, and will do you no credit with the girl. Women distrust men who distrust themselves, and take to men who distrust nothing. Modesty is a capital thing in a recruit, I grant you; or in a young subaltern who has just joined, for it prevents his railing at the non-commissioned officers before he knows what to rail at; I'm not sure it is out of place in a commissary or a parson, but it's the devil and all when it gets possession of a real soldier or a lover. Look at Lieutenant Muir; the man has had five wives already, they tell me, and there is no more modesty in him than there is in a cat-o'-nine-tails."

"Lieutenant Muir will never be the husband of Mabel Dunham, let him ruffle his feathers as much as he may."

"That is a sensible remark of yours, Pathfinder; for my mind is made up that you shall be my son-in-law. If I were an officer myself, Mr. Muir might have some chance; but time has placed one door between my child and myself, and I don't intend there shall be that of a marquee also."

"Sergeant, we must let Mabel follow her own fancy; she is young and light of heart, and God forbid that any wish of mine should lay the weight of a feather on a mind that is all gaiety now, or take one note of happiness from her laughter!"

"Have you conversed freely with the girl?" the Sergeant demanded quickly, and with some asperity of manner.

Pathfinder was too honest to deny a truth plain as that which the answer required, and yet too honorable to betray Mabel, and expose her to the resentment of one whom he well knew to be stern in his anger.

"We have laid open our minds," he said; "and though Mabel's is one that any man might love to look at, I find little there, Sergeant, to make me think any better of myself."

"The girl has not dared to refuse you—to refuse her father's best friend?"

Pathfinder turned his face away to conceal the look of anguish that consciousness told him was passing athwart it, but he continued the discourse in his own quiet, manly tones.

"Mabel is too kind to refuse anything, or utter harsh

words to a dog. I have not put the question in a way to be downright refused, Sergeant."

"And did you expect my daughter to jump into your arms before you asked her? She would not have been her mother's child had she done any such thing, nor do I think she would have been mine. The Dunhams like plain dealing as well as the king's majesty; but they are no jumpers. Leave me to manage this matter for you, Pathfinder, and there shall be no unnecessary delay. I'll speak to Mabel myself this very evening, using your name as principal in the affair."

"I'd rather not, I'd rather not. Sergeant. Leave the matter to Mabel and me, and I think all will come right in the end. Young girls are like timorsome birds; they do not over-relish being hurried or spoken harshly to nither. Leave the matter to Mabel and me."

As Pathfinder and his military friend descended the hill to the shore of the lake, the discourse did not flag. The latter continued to persuade the former that his diffidence alone prevented complete success with Mabel and that he had only to persevere in order to prevail. "If it were not that Mabel is to be your wife, I would advise you to remain single. But here is the girl herself, and discretion is the word."

"Ah's me, Sergeant, I fear you are mistaken!"

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## CHAPTER XIII

MABEL was in waiting on the beach, and the canoe was soon launched. Pathfinder carried the party out through the surf in the same skillful manner that he had brought it in; and though Mabel's color heightened with excitement, and her heart seemed often ready to leap out of her mouth again, they reached the side of the *Scud* without having received even a drop of spray.

Ontario is like a quick-tempered man, sudden to be angered, and as soon appeased. The sea had already fallen; and though the breakers bounded the shore, far as the eye could reach, it was merely in lines of brightness, that appeared and vanished like the returning waves produced by a stone which had been dropped into a pool. The cable of the *Scud* was scarcely seen above the water, and Jasper

had already hoisted his sails, in readiness to depart as soon as the expected breeze from the shore should fill the canvas.

It was just sunset as the cutter's mainsail flapped and its stem began to sever the water. The air was light and southerly, and the head of the vessel was kept looking up along the south shore, it being the intention to get to the eastward again as fast as possible. The night that succeeded was quiet; and the rest of those who slept deep and tranquil.

Some difficulty occurred concerning the command of the vessel, but the matter had been finally settled by an amicable compromise. As the district of Jasper was far from being appeased, Cap retained a supervisory power, while the young man was allowed to work the craft, subject, at all times, to the control and interference of the old seaman. To this Jasper consented, in preference to exposing Mabel any longer to the dangers of their present situation; for, now that the violence of the elements had ceased, he well knew that the *Montcalm* would be in search of them. He had the discretion, however, not to reveal his apprehensions on his head; for it happened that the very means he deemed the best to escape the enemy were those which would be most likely to awaken new suspicions of his honesty in the minds of those who held the power to defeat his intentions. In other words, Jasper believed that the gallant young Frenchman, who commanded the ship of the enemy, would quit his anchorage under the fort at Niagara, and stand up the lake, as soon as the wind abated, in order to ascertain the fate of the *Scud*.

The appearance of day brought all on board on deck again; and, as is usual with adventurers on the water, the opening horizon was curiously examined, as objects started out of the obscurity, and the panorama brightened under the growing light. East, west, and north nothing was visible but water glittering in the rising sun; but southward stretched the endless belt of woods that then held Ontario in a setting of forest verdure. Suddenly an opening appeared ahead, and then the massive walls of a château-looking house, with outworks, bastions, blockhouses, and palisadoes, frowned on a headland that bordered the outlet of a broad stream. Just as the fort became visible, a little cloud rose over it, and the white ensign of France was seen fluttering from a lofty flagstaff.

Cap gave an ejaculation as he witnessed this ungrateful exhibition, and he cast a quick suspicious glance at his brother-in-law.

"The dirty tablecloth hung up to air, as my name is Charles Cap!" he muttered; "and we hugging this d—d shore as if it were our wife and children met on the return from an India v'y'ge! Hark'e, Jasper, are you in search of a cargo of frogs, that you keep so near in to this New France?"

"I hug the land, sir, in the hope of passing the enemy's ship without being seen, for I think she must be somewhere down here to leeward."

"Ay, ay, this sounds well, and I hope it may turn out as you say. I trust there is no under-tow here?"

A gun at this moment was discharged from a blockhouse near the fort; and the shot, one of light weight, came whistling over the cutter's mast, an admonition to approach no nearer. Jasper was at the helm, and he kept away, smiling at the same time as if he felt no anger at the rudeness of the salutation. The *Scud* was now in the current, and her outward set soon carried her far enough to leeward to avoid the danger of a repetition of the shot, and then she quietly continued her course along the land. As soon as the river was fairly open, Jasper ascertained that the *Montcalm* was not at anchor in it; and a man sent aloft came down with the report that the horizon showed no sail. The hope was now strong that the artifice of Jasper had succeeded, and that the French commander had missed them by keeping the middle of the lake as he steered towards its head.

All that day the wind hung to the southward, and the cutter continued her course about a league from the land, running six or eight knots the hour in perfectly smooth water.

When the next day dawned, the cutter had the mouth of the Oswego well under the lee, distant about two miles; and just as the morning gun from the fort was fired, Jasper gave the order to ease off the sheets, and to bear up for his port. At that moment a cry from the forecastle drew all eyes towards the point on the eastern side of the outlet, and there, just without the range of the shot from the light guns of the works, with her canvas reduced to barely enough to keep her stationary, lay the *Montcalm*, evidently in waiting for their appearance.



To pass her was impossible, for by filling her sails the French ship could have intercepted them in a few minutes; and the circumstances called for a prompt decision. After a short consultation, the Sergeant again changed his plan, determining to make the best of his way towards the station for which he had been originally destined, trusting to the speed of the *Scud* to throw the enemy so far astern as to leave no clue to her movements.

The cutter accordingly hauled upon a wind with the least possible delay, with everything set that would draw. Guns were fired from the fort, ensigns shown, and the ramparts were again crowded. But sympathy was all the aid that Lundie could lend to his party; and the *Mont-calm*, also firing four or five guns of defiance, and throwing abroad several of the banners of France, was soon in chase under a cloud of canvas.

For several hours the two vessels were pressing through the water as fast as possible, making short stretches to windward, apparently with a view to keep the port under their lee, the one to enter it if possible, and the other to intercept it in the attempt.

At meridian the French ship was hull down, dead to leeward, the disparity of sailing on a wind being very great, and some islands were near by, behind which Jasper said it would be possible for the cutter to conceal her future movements. Although Cap and the Sergeant, and particularly Lieutenant Muir, to judge by his language, still felt a good deal of distrust of the young man, and Frontenac was not distant, this advice was followed; for time pressed, and the Quartermaster discreetly observed that Jasper could not well betray them without running openly into the enemy's harbor, a step they could at any time prevent, since the only cruiser of force the French possessed at the moment was under their lee and not in a situation to do them any immediate injury.

Left to himself, Jasper Western soon proved how much was really in him. The *Scud* was brought to in a small retired bay, where it would have been difficult to find her by daylight, and where she was perfectly concealed at night, when all but a solitary sentinel on deck sought their rest. Cap had been so harassed during the previous eight-and-forty hours, that his slumbers were long and deep; nor did he awake from his first nap until the day was just beginning to dawn. His eyes were scarcely open, however, when his

nautical instinct told him that the cutter was under way. Springing up, he found the *Scud* threading the islands again, with no one on deck but Jasper and the pilot, unless the sentinel be excepted, who had not in the least interfered with movements that he had every reason to believe were as regular as they were necessary.

"How's this, Master Western?" demanded Cap, with sufficient fierceness for the occasion; "are you running us into Frontenac at last, and we all asleep below, like so many mariners waiting for the 'sentry go'?"

"This is according to orders, Master Cap, Major Duncan having commanded me never to approach the station unless at a moment when the people were below; for he does not wish there should be more pilots in those waters than the king has need of."

"Whe—e—e—w! a' pretty job I should have made of running down among these bushes and rocks with no one on deck! Why, a regular York branch could make nothing of such a channel."

"I always thought, sir," said Jasper, smiling, "you would have done better had you left the cutter in my hands until she had safely reached her place of destination."

"We should have done it, Jasper, we should have done it, had it not been for a circumstance; these circumstances are serious matters, and no prudent man will overlook them."

"Well, sir, I hope there is now and end of them. We shall arrive in less than an hour if the wind holds, and then you'll be safe from any circumstances that I can contrive."

"Humph!"

Cap was obliged to acquiesce; and, as everything around him had the appearance of Jasper's being sincere, there was not much difficulty in making up his mind to submit.

"I give it up, I give it up, Pathfinder!" the old seaman at length exclaimed, when the little vessel emerged in safety from the twentieth of these narrow inlets through which she had been so boldly carried, and set bodily alongside of a natural rocky quay, where she was immediately secured by good fasts run to the short. In a word, the station was reached, and the men of the 55th were greeted by their expecting comrades, with the satisfaction which a relief usually brings.

Mabel sprang upon the shore with a delight which she

did not care to express; and her father led his men after her with an alacrity which proved how wearied he had become of the cutter. The station, as the place was familiarly termed by the soldiers of the 55th, was indeed a spot to raise expectations of enjoyment among those who had been cooped up so long in a vessel of the dimensions of the *Scud*. None of the islands were high, though all lay at a sufficient elevation above the water to render them perfectly healthy and secure. Each had more or less of wood; and the greater number at that distant day were clothed with the virgin forest. The one selected by the troops for their purpose was small, containing about twenty acres of land, and by some of the accidents of the wilderness it had been partly stripped of its trees, probably centuries before the period of which we are writing, and a little grassy blade covered nearly half its surface.

The hour which succeeded the arrival of the *Scud* was one of hurried excitement. The party in possession had done nothing worthy of being mentioned, and, wearied with their seclusion, they were all eager to return to Oswego. The Sergeant and the officer he came to relieve had no sooner gone through the little ceremony of transferring the command, than the latter hurried on board the *Scud* with his whole party; and Jasper, who would gladly have passed the day on the island, was required to get under way forthwith, the wind promising a quick passage up the river and across the lake. Before separating, however, Lieutenant Muir, Cap, and the Sergeant had a private conference with the ensign who had been relieved, in which the last was made acquainted with the suspicions that existed against the fidelity of the young sailor. Promising due caution, the officer embarked, and in less than three hours from the time when she had arrived the cutter was again in motion.

Mabel had taken possession of a hut; and with female readiness and skill she made all the simple little domestic arrangements of which the circumstances would admit, not only for her own comfort, but for that of her father. To save labor, a mess-table was prepared in a hut set apart for that purpose, where all the heads of the detachment were to eat, the soldier's wife performing the necessary labor. The hut of the Sergeant, which was the best on the island, being thus freed from any of the vulgar offices of a household, admitted of such a display of womanly

taste, that, for the first time since her arrival on the frontier, Mabel felt proud of her home. As soon as these important duties were discharged, she strolled out on the island, taking a path which led through the pretty glade, and which conducted to the only point not covered with bushes. Here she stood gazing at the limpid water, which lay with scarcely a ruffle on it at her feet, musing on the novel situation in which she was placed, and permitting a pleasing and deep excitement to steal over her feelings, as she remembered the scenes through which she had so lately passed, and conjectured those which still lay veiled in the future.

"You're a beautiful fixture, in a beautiful spot, Mistress Mabel," said David Muir, suddenly appearing at her elbow; "and I'll no' engage you're not just the handsomest of the two."

"I will not say, Mr. Muir, that compliments on my person are altogether unwelcome, for I should not gain credit for speaking the truth, perhaps," answered Mabel with spirit; "but I will say that if you would condescend to address to me some remarks of a different nature, I may be led to believe you think I have sufficient faculties to understand them."

"Hoot! your mind, beautiful Mabel, is polished just like the barrel of a soldier's musket, and your conversation is only too discreet and wise for a poor d—l who has been chewing birch up here these four years on the lines, instead of receiving it in an application that has the virtue of imparting knowledge. But you are no' sorry, I take it, young lady, that you've got your pretty foot on *terra firma* once more."

"I thought so two hours since, Mr. Muir; but the *Scud* looks so beautiful, as she sails through these vistas of trees, that I almost regret I am no longer one of her passengers."

As Mabel ceased speaking, she waved her handkerchief in return to a salutation from Jasper, who kept his eyes fastened on her form until the white sails of the cutter had swept round a point, and were nearly lost behind its green fringe of leaves.

"There they go, and I'll no' say 'joy go with them;' but may they have the luck to return safely, for without them we shall be in danger of passing the winter on this island; unless, indeed, we have the alternative of the castle at Quebec. Yon Jasper Eau-douce is a vagrant sort of a lad,



and they have reports of him in the garrison that it pains my very heart to hear. Your worthy father, and almost as worthy uncle, have none of the best opinion of him."

"I am sorry to hear it, Mr. Muir; I doubt not that time will remove all their distrust."

"If time would only remove mine, pretty Mabel," rejoined the Quartermaster in a wheedling tone, "I should feel no envy of the commander-in-chief. I think if I were in a condition to retire, the Sergeant would just step into my shoes."

"If my dear father is worthy to step into your shoes, Mr. Muir," returned the girl, with malicious pleasure, "I'm sure that the qualification is mutual, and that you are every way worthy to step into his."

"The deuce is in the child! you would not reduce me to the rank of a non-commissioned officer, Mabel?"

"No, indeed, sir; I was not thinking of the army at all as you spoke of retiring. My thoughts were more egotistical, and I was thinking how much you reminded me of my dear father, by your experience, wisdom, and suitability to take his place as the head of a family."

"As its bridegroom, pretty Mabel, but not as its parent or natural chief. I see how it is with you, loving your repartee, and brilliant with wit. Well, I like spirit in a young woman, so it be not the spirit of a scold. This Pathfinder is an extraordinair, Mabel, if truth may be said of the man."

"Truth should be said of him or nothing. Pathfinder is my friend—my very particular friend, Mr. Muir, and no evil can be said of him in my presence that I shall not deny."

"I shall say nothing evil of him, I can assure you, Mabel; but, at the same time, I doubt if much good can be said in his favor."

"He is at least expert with the rifle," returned Mabel, smiling. "That *you* cannot deny."

"Let him have all the credit of his exploits in that way if you please; but he is as illiterate as a Mohawk."

"He may not understand Latin, but his knowledge of Iroquois is greater than that of most men, and it is the more useful language of the two in this part of the world."

"If Lundie himself were to call on me for an opinion which I admire more, your person or your wit, beautiful and caustic Mabel, I should be at a loss to answer. My

admiration is so nearly divided between them, that I often fancy this is the one that bears off the palm, and then the other! Ah! the late Mrs. Muir was a paragon in that way also."

"The latest Mrs. Muir, did you say, sir?" asked Mabel, looking up innocently at her companion.

"Hoot, hoot! That is some of Pathfinder's scandal. Now I daresay that the fellow has been trying to persuade you, Mabel, that I have had more than one wife already."

"In that case his time would have been thrown away, sir, as everybody knows that you have been so unfortunate as to have had four."

"Only three, as sure as my name is David Muir. The fourth is pure scandal—or rather, pretty Mabel, she is yet *in petto*, as they say at Rome; and that means, in matters of love, in the heart, my dear."

"Well, I'm glad I'm not that fourth person, *in petto*, or in anything else, as I should not like to be a scandal."

"No fear of that, charming Mabel; for were you the fourth, all the others would be forgotten, and your wonderful beauty and merit would at once elevate you to be the first. No fear of your being fourth in anything."

"There is consolation in that assurance, Mr. Muir," said Mabel, laughing, "whatever there may be in your other assurance; for I confess I should prefer being even a fourth-rate beauty to being a fourth wife."

So saying she tipped away, leaving the Quartermaster to meditate on his success. David Muir, accustomed to rebuffs, and familiar with the virtue of perseverance, saw no reason to despair, though the half-menacing, half-self-satisfied manner in which he shook his head towards the retreating girl might have betrayed designs as sinister as they were determined. While he was thus occupied, the Pathfinder approached, and got within a few feet of him unseen.

"'Twill never do, Quartermaster, 'twill never do," commenced the latter, laughing in his noiseless way; "she is young and active, and none but a quick foot can overtake her. They tell me you are her suitor, if you are not her follower."

"And I hear the same of yourself, man, though the presumption would be so great that I scarcely can think it true."

"I fear you're right, I do; yes, I fear you're right;—when I consider myself, what I am, how little I know, and

how rude my life has been, I altogether distrust my claim, even to think a moment of one so tutored, and gay, and light of heart, and delicate——”

“You forget handsome,” coarsely interrupted Muir.

“And handsome, too, I fear,” returned the meek and self-abased guide; “I might have said handsome at once, among her other qualities; for the young fa’n, just as it learns to bound, is not more pleasant to the eye of the hunter than Mabel is lovely in mine. I do indeed fear that all the thoughts I have harbored about her are vain and presumptuous.”

“If you think this, my friend, of your own accord and natural modesty, as it might be, my duty to you as an old fellow-campaigner compels me to say——”

“Quartermaster,” interrupted the other, regarding his companion keenly, “you and I have lived together much behind the ramparts of forts, but very little in the open woods or in front of the enemy.”

“Garrison or tent, it all passes for part of the same campaign, you know, Pathfinder; and then my duty keeps me much within sight of the storehouses, greatly contrary to my inclinations, as ye may well suppose, having yourself the ardor of battle in your temperament. But had ye heard what Mabel had just been saying of you, ye’d no think another minute of making yourself agreeable to the saucy and uncompromising hussy.”

Pathfinder looked earnestly at the lieutenant, for it was impossible he should not feel an interest in what might be Mabel’s opinion; but he had too much of the innate and true feeling of a gentleman to ask to hear what another had said of him. Muir, however, was not to be foiled by this self-denial and self-respect; for, believing he had a man of great truth and simplicity to deal with, he determined to practise on his credulity, as one means of getting rid of his rivalry. He therefore pursued the subject, as soon as he perceived that his companion’s self-denial was stronger than his curiosity.

“You ought to know her opinion, Pathfinder,” he continued; “and I think every man ought to hear what his friends and acquaintances say of him: and so, by way of proving my own regard for your character and feelings, I’ll just tell you in as few words as possible. You know that Mabel has a wicked, malicious way with them eyes of

her own, when she has a mind to be hard upon one's feelings."

"To me her eyes, Lieutenant Muir, have always seemed winning and soft, though I will acknowledge that they sometimes laugh; yes, I have known them to laugh, and that right heartily, and with downright goodwill."

"Well, it was just that then; her eyes were laughing with all their might, as it were; and in the midst of all her fun, she broke out with an exclamation to this effect:—I hope 'twill no' hurt your sensibility, Pathfinder?"

"I will not say, Quartermaster, I will not say. Mabel's opinion of me is of more account than that of most others."

"Then I'll no' tell ye, but just keep discretion on the subject; and why should a man be telling another what his friends say of him, especially when they happen to say that which may not be pleasant to hear? I'll not add another word to this present communication."

"I cannot make you speak, Quartermaster, if you are not so minded, and perhaps it is better for me not to know Mabel's opinion, as you seem to think it is not in my favor. Ah's me! if we could be what we wish to be, instead of being only what we are, there would be a great difference in our characters and knowledge and appearance. One may be rude and coarse and ignorant, and yet happy, if he does not know it; but it is hard to see our own failings in the strongest light, just as we wish to hear the least about them."

"That's just the *rationale*, as the French say, of the matter; and so I was telling Mabel, when she ran away and left me. You noticed the manner in which she skipped off as you approached?"

"It was very observable," answered Pathfinder, drawing a long breath and clenching the barrel of his rifle as if the fingers would bury themselves in the iron.

"It was more than observable—it was flagrant; that's just the word, and the dictionary wouldn't supply a better, after an hour's search. Well, you must know, Pathfinder,—for I cannot reasonably deny you the gratification of hearing this,—so you must know the minx bounded off in that manner in preference to hearing what I had to say in your justification."

"And what could you find to say in my behalf, Quartermaster?"

"Why, d'ye understand, my friend, I was ruled by cir-



cumstances, and no' ventured indiscreetly into generalities, but was preparing to meet particulars, as it might be, with particulars. If you were thought wild, half-savage, or of a frontier formation, I could tell her, ye know, that it came of the frontier, wild and half-savage life ye'd led; and all her objections must cease at once, or there would be a sort of a misunderstanding with Providence."

"And did you tell her this, Quartermaster?"

"I'll no' swear to the exact words, but the idea was prevalent in my mind, ye'll understand. The girl was impatient, and would not hear the half I had to say; but away she skipped, as ye saw with your own eyes, Pathfinder, as if her opinion were fully made up, and she cared to listen no longer. I fear her mind may be said to have come to its conclusion?"

"I fear it has indeed, Quartermaster, and her father, after all, is mistaken. Yes, yes; the Sergeant has fallen into a grievous error."

"Well, man, why need ye lament, and undo all the grand reputation ye've been so many weary years making? Shoulder the rifle that ye use so well, and off into the woods with ye, for there's not the female breathing that is worth a heavy heart for a minute, as I know from experience. Tak' the word of one who knows the sax, and has had two wives, that women, after all, are very much the sort of creatures we do not imagine them to be. Now, if you would really mortify Mabel, here is as glorious an occasion as any rejected lover could desire."

"The last wish I have, Lieutenant, would be to mortify Mabel."

"Well, ye'll come to that in the end, notwithstanding; for it's human nature to desire to give unpleasant feelings to them that give unpleasant feelings to us. But a better occasion never offered to make your friends love you, than is to be had at this very moment, and that is the certain means of causing one's enemies to envy us."

"Quartermaster, Mabel is not my inimy; and if she was, the last thing I could desire would be to give her an uneasy moment."

"Ye say so, Pathfinder, ye say so, and I daresay ye think so; but reason and nature are both against you, as ye'll find in the end. Ye've heard the saying of 'love me, love my dog:' well, now, that means, read backwards, 'don't love me, don't love my dog.' now, listen to what is in

your power to do. You know we occupy an exceedingly precarious and uncertain position here, almost in the jaws of the lion, as it were?"

"Do you mean the Frenchers by the lion, and this island as his jaws, Lieutenant?"

"Metaphorically only, my friend, for the French are no lions, and this island is not a jaw—unless, indeed, it may prove to be, what I greatly fear may come true, the jaw-bone of an ass."

Here the Quartermaster indulged in a sneering laugh, that proclaimed anything but respect and admiration for his friend Lundie's sagacity in selecting that particular spot for his operation.

"The post is as well chosen as any I ever put foot in," said Pathfinder, looking around him as one surveys a picture.

"I'll no' deny it, I'll no' deny it. Lundie is a great soldier, in a small way, and his father was a great laird, with the same qualification. I was born on the estate, and have followed the Major so long that I've got to reverence all he says and does: that's just my weakness, ye'll know, Pathfinder. Well, this post may be the post of an ass, or of a Solomon, as men fancy; but it's most critically placed, as is apparent by all Lundie's precautions and injunctions. There are savages out scouting through these Thousand Islands and over the forest, searching for this very spot, as is known to Lundie himself, on certain information; and the greatest service you can render the 55th is to discover their trails and lead them off on a false scent. Unhappily Sergeant Dunham has taken up the notion that the danger is to be apprehended from up-stream, because Frontenac lies above us; whereas all experience tells us the Indians come on the side which is most contrary to reason, and, consequently, are to be expected from below. Take your canoe, therefore, and go down-stream among the islands, that we may have notice if any danger approaches from that quarter."

"The Big Sarpent is on the look-out in that quarter; and as he knows the station well, no doubt he will give us timely notice, should any wish to sarcumvent us in that direction."

"He is but an Indian, after all, Pathfinder; and this is an affair that calls for the knowledge of a white man."

The Quartermaster then continued to reason with his companion, in order to induce him to quit the island with-

out delay, using such arguments as first suggested themselves, sometimes contradicting himself, and not unfrequently urging at one moment a motive that at the next was directly opposed by another. The Pathfinder, simple as he was, detected these flaws in the Lieutenant's philosophy, though he was far from suspecting that they proceeded from a desire to clear the coast of Mabel's suitor. He did not exactly suspect the secret objects of Muir, but he was far from being blind to his sophistry. The result was that the two parted, after a long dialogue, unconvinced, and distrustful of each other's motives, though the distrust of the guide, like all that was connected with the man, partook of his own upright, disinterested, and ingenuous nature.

A conference that took place soon after between Sergeant Dunham and the Lieutenant led to more consequences. When it was ended, secret orders were issued to the men, the blockhouse was taken possession of, the huts were occupied, and one accustomed to the movements of soldiers might have detected that an expedition was in the wind. In fact, just as the sun was setting, the Sergeant, who had been much occupied at what was called the harbor, came into his own hut, followed by Pathfinder and Cap; and as he took his seat at the neat table which Mabel had prepared for him, he opened the budget of his intelligence.

"You are likely to be of some use here, my child," the old soldier commenced, "as this tidy and well-ordered supper can testify; and I trust, when the proper moment arrives, you will show yourself to be the descendant of those who know how to face their enemies."

"You do not expect me, dear father, to play Joan of Arc, and to lead the men to battle?"

"Play whom, child? Did you ever hear of the person Mabel mentions, Pathfinder?"

"Not I, Sergeant; but what of that? I am ignorant and uneducated, and it is too great a pleasure to me to listen to her voice, and in her words, to be particular about persons."

"I know her," said Cap decidedly; "she sailed a privateer out of Morlaix in the last war; and good cruises she made of them."

Mabel blushed at having inadvertently made an allusion that went beyond her father's reading, to say nothing of her uncle's dogmatism, and, perhaps, a little at the Path-

finder's simple, ingenuous earnestness; but she did not forbear the less to smile.

"Why, father, I am not expected to fall in with the men, and to help defend the island?"

"And yet the women have often done such things in this quarter of the world, girl, as our friend, the Pathfinder here, will tell you. But lest you should be surprised at not seeing us when you awake in the morning, it is proper that I now tell you we intend to march in the course of this very night."

"We, father! and leave me and Jennie on this island alone?"

"No, my daughter; not quite as unmilitary as that. We shall leave Lieutenant Muir, brother Cap, Corporal M'Nab, and three men to compose the garrison during our absence. Jennie will remain with you in this hut, and brother Cap will occupy my place."

"And Mr. Muir?" said Mabel, half unconscious of what she uttered, though she foresaw a great deal of unpleasant persecution in the arrangement.

"Why, he can make love to you, if you like it, girl; for he is an amorous youth, and having already disposed of four wives, is impatient to show how much he honors their memories by taking a fifth."

"The Quartermaster tells me," said Pathfinder innocently, "that when a man's feelings have been harassed by so many losses, there is no wiser way to soothe them than by ploughing up the soil anew, in such a manner as to leave no traces of what have gone over it before."

"Ay, that is just the difference between ploughing and harrowing," returned the Sergeant, with a grim smile. "But let him tell Mabel his mind, and there will be an end of his suit. I very well know that *my* daughter will never be the wife of Lieutenant Muir."

The Sergeant nodded at the guide, as much as to say, You see how the land lies; and then he had sufficient consideration for his daughter's feelings to change the subject.

"Neither you nor Mabel, brother Cap," he resumed, "can have any legal authority with the little garrison I leave behind on the island; but you may counsel and influence. Strictly speaking, Corporal M'Nab will be the commanding officer, and I will have endeavored to impress him with a sense of his dignity, lest he might give way too much to the



superior rank of Lieutenant Muir, who being a volunteer, can have no right to interfere with the duty. I wish you to sustain the Corporal, brother Cap; for should the Quartermaster once break through the regulations of the expedition, he may pretend to command me, as well as M'Nab."

"More particularly, should Mabel really cut him adrift while you are absent. Of course, Sergeant, you'll leave everything that is afloat under my care? The most dreadful confusion has grown out of misunderstandings between commanders-in-chief, ashore and afloat."

"In one sense, brother, though in a general way, the Corporal is commander-in-chief. The Corporal must command; but you can counsel freely, particularly in all matters relating to the boats, of which I shall leave one behind to secure your retreat, should there be occasion. I know the Corporal well; he is a brave man and a good soldier; and one that may be relied on, if the Santa Cruz can be kept from him. But then he is a Scotchman, and will be liable to the Quartermaster's influence, against which I desire both you and Mabel to be on your guard."

"But why leave us behind, dear father? I have come thus far to be a comfort to you, and why not go farther?"

"You are a good girl, Mabel, and very like the Dunhams. But you must halt here. We shall leave the island tomorrow, before the day dawns, in order not to be seen by any prying eyes coming from our cover, and we shall take the two largest boats, leaving you the other and one bark canoe. We are about to go into the channel used by the French, where we shall lie in wait, perhaps a week, to intercept their supply-boats, which are about to pass up on their way to Frontenac, loaded, in particular, with a heavy amount of Indian goods."

"Have you looked well to your papers, brother?" Cap anxiously demanded. "Of course you know a capture on the high seas is piracy, unless your boat is regularly commissioned, either as a public or a private armed cruiser."

"I have the honor to hold the Colonel's appointment as sergeant-major of the 55th," returned the other, drawing himself up with dignity, "and that will be sufficient even for the French king. If not, I have Major Duncan's written orders."

"No papers, then, for a warlike cruiser?"

"They must suffice, brother, as I have no other. It is of vast importance to his Majesty's interests, in this part

of the world, that the boats in question should be captured and carried into Oswego. They contain the blankets, trinkets, rifles, ammunition, in short, all the stores with which the French bribe their accursed savage allies to commit their unholy acts, setting at nought our holy religion and its precepts, the laws of humanity, and all that is sacred, and dear among men. By cutting off these supplies we shall derange their plans, and gain time on them; for the articles cannot be sent across the ocean again this autumn."

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## CHAPTER XIV

It was not only broad daylight when Mable awoke the next morning, but the sun had actually been up some time. Her sleep had been tranquil, for she rested on an approving conscience, and fatigue contributed to render it sweet; and no sound of those who had been so early in motion had interfered with her rest. Springing to her feet and rapidly dressing herself the girl was soon breathing the fragrance of the morning in the open air. For the first time she was sensibly struck with the singular beauties, as well as with the profound retirement, of her present situation. The day proved to be one of those of the autumnal glory, so common to a climate that is more abused than appreciated, and its influence was every way inspiring and genial. Mabel was benefited by this circumstance; for, as she fancied, her heart was heavy on account of the dangers to which a father, whom she now began to love as women love when confidence is created, was exposed.

Perceiving that all the others were occupied with that great concern of human nature, breaking, Mabel walked, unobserved, towards an end of the island where she was completely shut out of view by the trees and bushes. Here she got a stand on the very edge of the water, by forcing aside the low branches, and stood watching the barely perceptible flow and re-flow of the miniature waves which laved the shore; a sort of physical echo to the agitation that prevailed on the lake fifty miles above her. The glimpses of natural scenery that offered were very soft and pleasing; and our heroine, who had a quick eye for all that was lovely in nature, was not slow in selecting the most striking bits of landscape. She gazed through the

different vistas formed by the opening between the islands, and thought she had never looked on aught more lovely.

While thus occupied, Mabel was suddenly alarmed by fancying that she caught a glimpse of a human form among the bushes that lined the shore of the island which lay directly before her. The distance across the water was not a hundred yards; and, though she might be mistaken, and her fancy was wandering when the form passed before her sight, still she did not think she could be deceived. Aware that her sex would be no protection against a rifle bullet, should an Iroquois get a view of her, the girl instinctively drew back, taking care to conceal her person as much as possible by the leaves, while she kept her own look riveted on the opposite shore, vainly waiting for some time in the expectation of the stranger. She was about to quit her post in the bushes and hasten to her uncle, in order to acquaint him of her suspicions, when she saw the branch of an alder thrust beyond the fringe of bushes on the other island, and waved towards her significantly, and as she fancied in token of amity. This was a breathless and a trying moment to one as inexperienced in frontier warfare as our heroine; and yet she felt the great necessity that existed for preserving her recollection, and of acting with steadiness and discretion.

It was one of the peculiarities of the exposure to which those who dwelt on the frontiers of America were liable, to bring out the moral qualities of the women to a degree which they must themselves, under other circumstances, have believed they were incapable of manifesting; and Mabel well knew that the borderers loved to dwell in their legends on the presence of mind, fortitude, and spirit that their wives and sisters had displayed under circumstances the most trying. Her emulation had been awakened by what she had heard on such subjects; and it at once struck her that now was the moment for her to show that she was truly Sergeant Dunham's child. The motion of the branch was just as she believed indicated amity; and, after a moment's hesitation, she broke off a twig, fastened it to a stick, and thrusting it through an opening, waved it in return, imitating as closely as possible the manner of the other.

This dumb show lasted two or three minutes on both sides, when Mabel perceived that the bushes opposite were cautiously pushed aside, and a human face appeared at an

opening. A glance sufficed to let Mabel see that it was the countenance of a red-skin, as well as that of a woman. A second and a better look satisfied her that it was the face of the Dew-of-June, the wife of Arrowhead. During the time she had traveled in company with this woman, Mabel had been won by the gentleness of manner, the meek simplicity, and the mingled awe and affection with which she regarded her husband. Once or twice in the course of the journey she fancied the Tuscarora had manifested towards herself an unpleasant degree of attention; and on those occasions it had struck her that his wife exhibited sorrow and mortification. As Mabel, however, had more than compensated for any pain she might in this way unintentionally have caused her companion, by her own kindness of manner and attentions, the woman had shown much attachment to her, and they had parted, with a deep conviction on the mind of our heroine that in the Dew-of-June she had lost a friend.

It is useless to attempt to analyze all the ways by which the human heart is led into confidence. Such a feeling, however, had the young Tuscarora woman awakened in the breast of our heroine; and the latter, under the impression that this extraordinary visit was intended for her own good, felt every disposition to have a closer communication. She no longer hesitated about showing herself clear of the bushes, and was not sorry to see the Dew-of-June imitate her confidence, by stepping fearlessly out of her own cover. The two girls, for the Tuscarora, though married, was even younger than Mabel, now openly exchanged signs of friendship, and the latter beckoned to her friend to approach, though she knew not the manner herself in which this object could be effected. But the Dew-of-June was not slow in letting it be seen that it was in her power; for, disappearing in a moment, she soon showed herself again in the end of a bark canoe, the bows of which she had drawn to the edge of the bushes, and of which the body still lay in a sort of covered creek. Mabel was about to invite her to cross, when her own name was called aloud in the stentorian voice of her uncle. Making a hurried gesture for the Tuscarora girl to conceal herself, Mabel sprang from the bushes and tripped up the glade towards the sound, and perceived that the whole party had just seated themselves at breakfast; Cap having barely put his appetite under sufficient restraint to summon her to



join them. That this was the most favorable instant for the interview flashed on the mind of Mabel; and excusing herself on the plea of not being prepared for the meal, she bounded back to the thicket, and soon renewed her communications with the young Indian woman.

Dew-of-June was quick of comprehension; and with half a dozen noiseless strokes of the paddles, her canoe was concealed in the bushes of Station Island. In another minute, Mabel held her hand, and was leading her through the grove towards her own hut. Fortunately the latter was so placed as to be completely hid from the sight of those at the fire, and they both entered it unseen. Hastily explaining to her guests, in the best manner she could, the necessity of quitting her for a short time, Mabel, first placing the Dew-of-June in her own room, with a full certainty that she would not quit it until told to do so, went to the fire and took her seat among the rest, with all the composure it was in her power to command.

"Late come, late served, Mabel, said her uncle, between mouthfuls of broiled salmon; for though the cookery might be very unsophisticated on that remote frontier, the viands were generally delicious,—“late come, late served; it is a good rule, and keeps laggards up to their work.”

"I am no laggard, uncle; for I have been stirring nearly an hour, and exploring our island."

"It's little you'll make o' that, Mistress Mabel," put in Muir; "that's little by nature. Lundie—or it might be better to style him Major Duncan in this presence" (this was said in consideration of the corporal and the common men, though they were taking their meal a little apart)—“has not added an empire to his Majesty's dominions in getting possession of this island."

The discourse became exceedingly desultory, touching principally, however, on the probabilities of an invasion, and the best means of meeting it.

To most of this Mabel paid but little attention; though she felt some surprise that Lieutenant Muir, an officer whose character for courage stood well, should openly recommend an abandonment of what appeared to her to be doubly a duty, a father's character being connected with the defence of the island. Her mind, however, was so much occupied with her guest, that, seizing the first favorable moment, she left the table, and was soon in her own hut again. Carefully fastening the door, and seeing that the simple

curtain was drawn before the single little window, Mabel next led the Dew-of-June, or June, as she was familiarly termed by those who spoke to her in English, into the outer room, making signs of affection and confidence.

"I am glad to see you, June," said Mabel, with one of her sweetest smiles, and in her own winning voice,—“very glad to see you. What has brought you hither, and how did you discover the island?”

“Speak slow,” said June, returning smile for smile, and pressing the little hand she held with one of her own that was scarcely larger, though it had been hardened by labor; “more slow—too quick.”

Mabel repeated her questions, endeavoring to repress the impetuosity of her feelings; and she succeeded in speaking so distinctly as to be understood.

“June, friend,” returned the Indian woman.

“I believe you, June—from my soul I believe you; what has this to do with your visit?”

“Friend come to see friend,” answered June, again smiling openly in the other’s face.

“There is some other reason, June, else would you never run this risk, and alone. You are alone, June?”

“June wid you, no one else. June come alone, paddle canoe.”

“I hope so, I think so—nay, I *know so*. You would not be treacherous with me, June?”

“What treacherous?”

“You would not betray me, would not give me to the French, to the Iroquois, to Arrowhead?”

June shook her head earnestly.

“You would not sell my scalp?”

Here June passed her arm fondly around the slender waist of Mabel and pressed her to her heart with a tenderness and affection that brought tears into the eyes of our heroine. It was done in the fond caressing manner of a woman, and it was scarcely possible that it should not obtain credit for sincerity with a young and ingenuous person of the same sex. Mabel returned the pressure, and then held the other off at the length of her arm, looked her steadily in the face, and continued her inquiries.

“If June has something to tell her friend, let her speak plainly,” she said. “My ears are open.”

“June ’fraid Arrowhead kill her.”

“But Arrowhead will never know it.” Mabel’s blood

mounted to her temples as she said this; for she felt that she was urging a wife to be treacherous to her husband. "That is, Mabel will not tell him."

"He bury tomahawk in June's head."

"That must never be, dear June; I would rather you should say no more than run this risk."

"Blockhouse good place to sleep, good place to stay."

"Do you mean that I may save my life by keeping in the blockhouse, June? Surely, surely, Arrowhead will not hurt you for telling me that. He cannot wish me any great harm, for I never injured him."

"Arrowhead wish no harm to handsome pale-face," returned June, averting her face; and, though she always spoke in the soft, gentle voice of an Indian girl, now permitting its notes to fall so low as to cause them to sound melancholy and timid. "Arrowhead love pale-face girl."

Mabel blushed, she knew not why, and for a moment her questions were repressed by a feeling of inherent delicacy. But it was necessary to know more, for her apprehensions had been keenly awakened, and she resumed her inquiries.

"Arrowhead can have no reason to love or to hate *me*," she said. "Is he near you?"

"Husband always near wife, here," said June, laying her hand on her heart.

"Excellent creature! But tell me, June, ought I to keep in the blockhouse to-day—this morning—now?"

"Blockhouse very good; good for women. Blockhouse got no scalp."

"I fear I understand you only too well, June. Do you wish to see my father?"

"No here; gone away."

"You cannot know that, June; you see the island is full of his soldiers."

"No full; gone away;"—here June held up four of her fingers,—"*so many red-coats.*"

"And Pathfinder? would you not like to see the Pathfinder? He can talk to you in the Iroquois tongue."

"Tongue gone wid him," said June, laughing; "*keep tongue in his mout.*"

There was something so sweet and contagious in the infantine laugh of an Indian girl, that Mabel could not refrain from joining in it, much as her fears were aroused by all that had passed.

"You appear to know, or to think you know, all about us, June. But if Pathfinder be gone, Eau-douce can speak French too. You know Eau-douce; shall I run and bring *him* to talk with you?"

"Eau-douce gone too, all but heart; that there." As June said this, she laughed again; looked in different directions, as if unwilling to confuse the other, and laid her hand on Mabel's bosom.

Our heroine had often heard of the wonderful sagacity of the Indians, and of the surprising manner in which they noted all things, while they appeared to regard none; but she was scarcely prepared for the direction the discourse had so singularly taken. Willing to change it, and at the same time truly anxious to learn how great the danger that impended over them might really be, she rose from the camp-stool on which she had been seated; and, by assuming an attitude of less affectionate confidence, she hoped to hear more of that she really desired to learn, and to avoid allusions to that which she found so embarrassing.

"You know how much or how little you ought to tell me, June," she said; "and I hope you love me well enough to give me the information I ought to hear. My dear uncle, too, is on the island, and you are, or ought to be, his friend as well as mine; and both of us will remember your conduct when we get back to Oswego."

"Maybe, never get back; who know?" This was said doubtfully, or as one who lays down an uncertain proposition, and not with a taunt, or a desire to alarm.

"No one knows what will happen but God. Our lives are in His hands. Still, I think you are to be His instrument in saving us."

This passed June's comprehension, and she only looked her ignorance; for it was evident she wished to be of use.

"Blockhouse very good," she repeated, as soon as her countenance ceased to express uncertainty, laying strong emphasis on the last two words.

"Well, I understand this, June, and will sleep in it to-night. Of course I am to tell my uncle what you have said?"

The Dew-of-June started, and she discovered a very manifest uneasiness at the interrogatory.

"No, no, no, no!" she answered, with a volubility and vehemence that was imitated from the French of the Canadas; "no good to tell Saltwater. He much talk and long



tongue. Thinks woods all water, understand not'ing. Tell Arrowhead, and June die."

"You do my dear uncle injustice, for he would be as little likely to betray you as any one."

"No understand. Saltwater got tongue, but no eyes, no ears, no nose—not'ing but tongue, tongue, tongue!"

Although Mabel did not exactly coincide in this opinion, she saw that Cap had not the confidence of the young Indian woman, and that it was idle to expect she would consent to his being admitted to their interview.

"You appear to think you know our situation pretty well, June," Mabel continued; "have you been on the island before this visit?"

"Just come."

"How then do you know that what you say is true? my father, the Pathfinder, and Eau-douce may all be here within sound of my voice, if I choose to call them."

"All gone," said June positively, smiling good-humoredly at the same time.

"Nay, this is more than you *can* say certainly, not having been over the island to examine it."

"Got good eyes; see boat with men go away—see ship with Eau-douce."

"Then you have been some time watching us. I think, however, you have not counted them that remain."

June laughed, held up her four fingers again, and then pointed to her two thumbs; passing a finger over the first, she repeated the words "red-coats;" and touching the last, she added, "Saltwater," "Quartermaster." All this was being very accurate, and Mabel began to entertain serious doubts as to the propriety of her permitting her visitor to depart without her becoming more explicit. Still it was so repugnant to her feelings to abuse the confidence this gentle and affectionate creature had evidently reposed in her, that Mabel had no sooner admitted the thought of summoning her uncle, than she rejected it as unworthy of herself and unjust to her friend. To aid this good resolution, too, there was the certainty that June would reveal nothing, but take refuge in a stubborn silence, if any attempt were made to coerce her.

"You think, then, June," Mabel continued, as soon as these thoughts had passed through her mind, "that I had better live in the blockhouse?"

"Good place for woman. Blockhouse got no scalp. Logs t'ick."

"You speak confidently, June; as if you had been in it, and had measured its walls."

June laughed; and she looked knowing, though she said nothing.

"Does any one but yourself know how to find this island? have any of the Iroquois seen it?"

June looked sad, and she cast her eyes warily about her, as if distrusting a listener.

"Tuscarora, everywhere—Oswego, here, Frontenac, Mohawk—everywhere. If he see June, kill her."

"But we thought that no one knew of this island, and that we had no reason to fear our enemies while on it."

"Much eye, Iroquois."

"Eyes will not always do, June. This spot is hid from ordinary sight, and few of even our own people know how to find it."

"One man can tell; some Yengeese talk French."

Mabel felt a chill at her heart. All the suspicions against Jasper, which she had hitherto disdained entertaining, crowded in a body on her thoughts; and the sensation that they brought was so sickening, that for an instant she imagined she was about to faint. Arousing herself, and remembering her promise to her father, she arose and walked up and down the hut for a minute, fancying that Jasper's delinquencies were naught to her, though her inmost heart yearned with the desire to think him innocent.

"I understand your meaning, June," she then said; "you wish me to know that some one has treacherously told your people where and how to find the island?"

June laughed, for in her eyes artifice in war was oftener a merit than a crime; but she was too true to her tribe herself to say more than the occasion required. Her object was to save Mabel, and Mabel only; and she saw no sufficient reason for "travelling out of the record," as the lawyers express it, in order to do anything else.

"Pale-face know now," she added. "Blockhouse good for girl, no matter for men and warriors."

"But it is much matter with me, June; for one of these men is my uncle, whom I love, and the others are my countrymen and friends. I must tell them what has passed."

"Then June be kill," returned the young Indian quietly, though she evidently spoke with concern.

"No; they shall not know that you have been here. Still, they must be on their guard, and we can all go into the blockhouse."

"Arrowhead know, see everything, and June be kill. June come to tell young pale-face friend, not to tell men. Every warrior watch his own scalp. June woman, and tell woman; no tell men."

Mabel was greatly distressed at this declaration of her wild friend, for it was now evident the young creature understood that her communication was to go no further. She was ignorant how far these people consider the point of honor interested in her keeping the secret; and most of all was she unable to say how far any indiscretion of her own might actually commit June and endanger her life. All these considerations flashed on her mind, and reflection only rendered their influence more painful. June, too, manifestly viewed the matter gravely; for she began to gather up the different little articles she had dropped in taking Mabel's hand, and was preparing to depart. To attempt detaining her was out of the question; and to part from her, after all she had hazarded to serve her, was repugnant to all the just and kind feelings of our heroine's nature.

"June," said she eagerly, folding her arms round the gentle but uneducated being, "we are friends. From me you have nothing to fear, for no one shall know of your visit. If you could give me some signal just before the danger comes, some sign by which to know when to go into the blockhouse, how to take care of myself."

June paused, for she had been in earnest in her intention to depart; and then she said quietly, "Bring June pigeon."

"A pigeon! Where shall I find a pigeon to bring you?"

"Next hut; bring old one; June go to canoe."

"I think I understand you, June; but had I not better lead you back to the bushes, lest you meet some of the men?"

"Go out first; count men, one, two, t'ree, four, five, six"—here June held up her fingers, and laughed—"all out of the way—good; all but one, call him one side. Then sing, and fetch pigeon."

Mabel smiled at the readiness and ingenuity of the girl, and prepared to execute her requests. At the door, however, she stopped, and looked back entreatingly at the Indian woman. "Is there no hope of your telling me more, June?" she said.

"Know all now, blockhouse good, pigeon tell, Arrowhead kill."

The last words sufficed; for Mabel could not urge further communications, when her companion herself told her that the penalty of her revelations might be death by the hand of her husband. Throwing open the door, she made a sign of adieu to June, and went out of the hut. Mabel resorted to the simple expedient of the young Indian girl to ascertain the situation of the different individuals on the island. Instead of looking about her with the intention of recognizing faces and dresses, she merely counted them; and found that three still remained at the fire, while two had gone to the boat, one of whom was Mr. Muir. The sixth man was her uncle; and he was coolly arranging some fishing-tackle at no great distance from the fire. The woman was just entering her own hut; and this accounted for the whole party. Mabel now, affecting to have dropped something, returned nearly to the hut she had left, warbling an air, stooped as if to pick up some object from the ground, and hurried towards the hut June had mentioned. This was a dilapidated structure, and it had been converted by the soldiers of the last detachment into a sort of storehouse for their live stock. Among other things, it contained a few dozen pigeons, which were regaling on a pile of wheat that had been brought off from one of the farms plundered on the Canada shore. Mabel had not much difficulty in catching one of these pigeons, although they fluttered and flew about the hut with a noise like that of drums; and, concealing it in her dress, she stole back towards her own hut with the prize. It was empty; and, without doing more than cast a glance in at the door, the eager girl hurried down to the shore. She had no difficulty in escaping observation, for the trees and bushes made a complete cover to her person. At the canoe she found June, who took the pigeon, placed it in a basket of her own manufacturing, and, repeating the words, "blockhouse good," she glided out of the bushes and across the narrow passage, as noiselessly as she had come. Mabel waited some time to catch a signal of leave-taking or amity after her friend had landed, but none was given. The adjacent islands, without exception, were as quiet as if no one had ever disturbed the sublime repose of nature, and nowhere could any sign or symptom be discovered, as Mabel then thought, that might



denote the proximity of the sort of danger of which June had given notice.

On returning, however, from the shore, Mabel was struck with a little circumstance, that, in an ordinary situation, would have attracted no attention, but which, now that her suspicions had been aroused, did not pass before her uneasy eye unnoticed. A small piece of red bunting, such as is used in the ensigns of ships, was fluttering at the lower branch of a small tree, fastened in a way to permit it to blow out, or to droop like a vessel's pennant.

Now that Mabel's fears were awakened, June herself could not have manifested greater quickness in analyzing facts that she believed might affect the safety of the party. She saw at a glance that this bit of cloth could be observed from an adjacent island; that it lay so near the line between her own hut and the canoe as to leave no doubt that June had passed near it, if not directly under it; and that it might be a signal to communicate some important fact connected with the mode of attack to those who were probably lying in ambush near them. Tearing the little strip of bunting from the tree, Mabel hastened on, scarcely knowing what her duty next required of her. June might be false to her, but her manner, her looks, her affection, and her disposition as Mabel had known it in the journey, forbade the idea. Then came the allusion to Arrowhead's admiration of the pale-face beauties, some dim recollections of the looks of the Tuscarora, and a painful consciousness that few wives could view with kindness one who had estranged a husband's affections. None of these images were distinct and clear, but they rather gleamed over the mind of our heroine than rested in it, and they quickened her pulses, as they did her step, without bringing with them the prompt and clear decisions that usually followed her reflections. She had hurried onwards towards the hut occupied by the soldier's wife, intending to remove at once to the blockhouse with the woman, though she could persuade no other to follow, when her impatient walk was interrupted by the voice of Muir.

"Whither so fast, pretty Mabel?" he cried; "and why so given to solitude? The worthy Sergeant will deride my breeding, if he hear that his daughter passes the mornings alone and unattended to, though he well knows it is

my ardent wish to be her slave and companion from the beginning of the year to its end."

"Surely, Mr. Muir, you must have some authority here?" Mabel suddenly arrested her steps to say. "One of your rank would be listened to, at least, by a corporal?"

"I don't know that, I don't know that," interrupted Muir, with an impatience and appearance of alarm that might have excited Mabel's attention at another moment. "Command is command; discipline, discipline; and authority, authority. Your good father would be sore grieved did he find me interfering to sully or carry off the laurels he is about to win; and I cannot command the Corporal without equally commanding the Sergeant. The wisest way will be for me to remain in the obscurity of a private individual in this enterprise; and it is so that all parties, from Lundie down, understand the transaction."

"This I know, and it may be well, nor would I give my dear father any cause of complaint; but you may influence the Corporal to his own good."

"I'll no' say that," returned Muir in his sly Scotch way; "it would be far safer to promise to influence him to his injury. Mankind, pretty Mabel, have their peculiarities; and to influence a fellow-being to his own good is one of the most difficult tasks of human nature, while the opposite is just the easiest. You'll no' forget this, my dear, but bear it in mind for your edification and government. But what is that you're twisting round your slender finger as you may be said to twist hearts?"

"It is nothing but a bit of cloth—a sort of flag—a trifle that is hardly worth our attention at this grave moment. If——"

"A trifle! It's no' so trifling as ye may imagine, Mistress Mabel," taking the bit of bunting from her, and stretching it at full length with both his arms extended, while his face grew grave and his eye watchful. "Ye'll no' ha' been finding this, Mabel Dunham, in the breakfast?"

Mabel simply acquainted him with the spot where and the manner in which she had found the bit of cloth. While she was speaking, the eye of the Quartermaster was not quiet for a moment, glancing from the rag to the face of our heroine, then back again to the rag. That his suspicions were awakened was easy to be seen, nor was he long in letting it be known what direction they had taken.

"We are not in a part of the world where our ensigns

and gauds ought to be spread abroad to the wind, Mabel Dunham!" he said, with an ominous shake of the head.

"I thought as much myself, Mr. Muir, and brought away the little flag lest it might be the means of betraying our presence here to the enemy, even though nothing is intended by its display. Ought not my uncle to be made acquainted with the circumstance?"

"I no' see the necessity for that, pretty Mabel; for, as you justly say, it is a circumstance, and circumstances sometimes worry the worthy mariner. But this flag, if flag it can be called, belongs to a seaman's craft. You may perceive that it is made of what is called bunting, and that is a description of cloth used only by vessels for such purposes, *our* colors being of silk, as you may understand, or painted canvas. It's surprisingly like the fly of the *Scud's* ensign. And now I recollect me to have observed that a piece had been cut from that very flag."

Mabel felt her heart sink, but she had sufficient self-command not to attempt an answer.

"It must be looked to," Muir continued, "and, after all, I think it may be well to hold a short consultation with Master Cap, than whom a more loyal subject does not exist in the British empire."

"I have thought the warning so serious," Mabel rejoined, "that I am about to remove to the blockhouse, and to take the woman with me."

"I do not see the prudence of that, Mabel. The blockhouse will be the first spot assailed should there really be an attack; and it's no' well provided for a siege, that must be allowed. If I might advise in so delicate a contingency, I would recommend your taking refuge in the boat, which, as you may now perceive, is most favorably placed to retreat by that channel opposite, where all in it would be hid by the islands in one or two minutes. Water leaves no trail, as Pathfinder well expresses it; and there appears to be so many different passages in that quarter that escape would be more probable. I've always been of opinion that Lundie hazarded too much in occupying a post so far advanced and so much exposed as this."

"It's too late to regret it now, Mr. Muir, and we have only to consult our own security."

"And the king's honor, pretty Mabel. Yes, his Majesty's arms and his glorious name are not to be overlooked on any occasion."

"Then I think it might be better if we all turned our eyes towards the place that has been built to maintain them instead of the boat," said Mabel, smiling; "and so, Mr. Muir, I am for the blockhouse, intending to await there the return of my father and his party. He would be sadly grieved at finding we had fled when he got back successful himself, and filled with the confidence of our having been as faithful to our duties as he had been to his own."

"Nay, nay, for heaven's sake, do not misunderstand me, Mabel!" Muir interrupted, with some alarm of manner; "I am far from intimating that any but you females ought to take refuge in the boat. The duty of us men is sufficiently plain, no doubt, and my resolution has been formed from the first to stand or fall by the blockhouse."

"And did you imagine, Mr. Muir, that two females could row that heavy boat in a way to escape the bark canoe of an Indian?"

"Ah, my pretty Mabel, love is seldom logical, and its fears and misgivings are apt to warp the faculties! I only saw your sweet person in the possession of the means of safety, and overlooked the want of ability to use them; but you'll not be so cruel, lovely creature, as to impute to me as a fault my intense anxiety on your own account!"

Mabel had heard enough: her mind was too much occupied with what had passed that morning, and with her fears, to wish to linger longer to listen to love speeches, which in her most joyous and buoyant moments she would have found unpleasant. She took a hasty leave of her companion, and was about to trip away towards the hut of the other woman, when Muir arrested the movement by laying a hand on her arm.

"One word, Mabel," said he, "before you leave me. This little flag may, or it may not, have a particular meaning; if it has, now that we are aware of its being shown, may it not be better to put it back again, while we watch vigilantly for some answer that may betray the conspiracy; and if it mean nothing, why, nothing will follow."

"This may be all right, Mr. Muir, though, if the whole is accidental, the flag might be the occasion of the fort's being discovered."

Mabel stayed to utter no more; but she was soon out of sight, running into the hut towards which she had been first proceeding. The Quartermaster remained on the very spot and in the precise attitude in which she had left him for



quite a minute, first looking at the bounding figure of the girl and then at the bit of bunting, which he still held before him in a way to denote indecision. His irresolution lasted but for this minute, however; for he was soon beneath the tree, where he fastened the mimic flag to a branch again, though, from his ignorance of the precise spot from which it had been taken by Mabel, he left it fluttering from a part of the oak where it was still more exposed than before to the eyes of any passenger on the river, though less in view from the island itself.

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## CHAPTER XV

It seemed strange to Mabel Dunham, as she passed along on her way to find her female companion, that others should be so composed, while she herself felt as if the responsibilities of life and death rested on her shoulders. It is true that distrust of June's motives mingled with her forebodings; but when she came to recall the affectionate and natural manner of the young Indian girl, and all the evidences of good faith and sincerity she had seen in her conduct during the familiar intercourse of their journey, she rejected the idea with the unwillingness of a generous disposition to believe ill of others. She saw, however, that she could not put her companions properly on their guard without letting them into the secret of her conference with June; and she found herself compelled to act cautiously and with a forethought to which she was unaccustomed, more especially in a matter of so much moment.

The soldier's wife was told to transport the necessities into the blockhouse, and admonished not to be far from it at any time during the day. Mabel did not explain her reasons. She merely stated that she had detected some signs in walking about the island, which induced her to apprehend that the enemy had more knowledge of its position than had been previously believed, and that they two at least, would do well to be in readiness to seek a refuge at the shortest notice. It was not difficult to arouse the apprehension of this person, who, though a stout-hearted Scotchwoman, was ready enough to listen to anything that confirmed her dread of Indian cruelties. As soon as Mabel believed that her companion was sufficiently frightened to

make her wary, she threw out some hints touching the inexpediency of letting the soldiers know the extent of their own fears. This was done with a view to prevent discussions and inquiries that might embarrass our heroine: she determining to render her uncle, the Corporal, and his men more cautious, by adopting a different course. Unfortunately, the British army could not have furnished a worse person for the particular duty that he was now required to discharge than Corporal M'Nab, the individual who had been left in command during the absence of Sergeant Dunham. A more impracticable subject, therefore, could not well have offered for the purpose of Mabel, and yet she felt obliged to lose no time in putting her plan in execution.

"My father has left you a responsible command, Corporal," she said, as soon as she could catch M'Nab a little apart; "for should the island fall into the hands of the enemy, not only should we be captured, but the party that is now out would in all probability become their prisoners also."

"It needs no journey from Scotland to this place to know the facts needful to be o' that way of thinking," returned M'Nab drily.

"I do not doubt your understanding it as well as myself, Mr. M'Nab, but I'm fearful that you veterans, accustomed as you are to dangers and battles, are a little apt to overlook some of the precautions that may be necessary in a situation as peculiar as ours."

"They say Scotland is no conquered country, young woman, but I'm thinking there must be some mistak' in the matter, as we, her children, are so drowsy-headed and apt to be o'ertaken when we least expect it."

"Nay, my good friend, you mistake my meaning. In the first place, I'm not thinking of Scotland at all, but of this island; and then I am far from doubting your vigilance when you think it necessary to practise it; but my great fear is that there may be danger to which your courage will make you indifferent."

"My courage, Mistress Dunham, is doubtless of a very poor quality, being nothing but Scottish courage; your father's is Yankee, and were he here amang us we should see different preparations, beyond a doubt. Well, times are getting wrang, when foreigners hold commissions and carry halberds in Scottish corps; and I no wonder that battles are lost, and campaigns go wrang end foremost."

Mabel was almost in despair; but the quiet warning of June was still too vividly impressed on her mind to allow her to yield the matter. She changed her mode of operating, therefore, still clinging to the hope of getting the whole party within the blockhouse, without being compelled to betray the source whence she obtained her notices of the necessity of vigilance.

"No true soldier despises caution," she began to argue. "Even Major Duncan himself, than whom there is none braver, is celebrated for his care of his men."

"Lundie has his weakness, and is fast forgetting the broadsword and open heaths in his tree and rifle practice. But, Mistress Dunham, tak' the word of an old soldier, who has seen his fifty-fifth year, when he tells ye that there is no surer method to encourage your enemy than to seem to fear him; and that there is no danger in this Indian warfare than the fancies and imaginations of your Americans have not enlarged upon, until they see a savage in every bush. We Scots come from a naked region, and have no need and less relish for covers, and so ye'll be seeing, Mistress Dunham——"

The Corporal gave a spring into the air, fell forward on his face, and rolled over on his back, the whole passing so suddenly that Mabel had scarcely heard the sharp crack of the rifle that had sent a bullet through his body. Our heroine did not shriek—did not even tremble; for the occurrence was too sudden, too awful, and too unexpected for that exhibition of weakness; on the contrary, she stepped hastily forward, with a natural impulse to aid her companion. There was just enough of life left in M'Nab to betray his entire consciousness of all that had passed. His countenance had the wild look of one who had been overtaken by death by surprise; and Mabel, in her cooler moments, fancied that it showed the tardy repentance of a willful and obstinate sinner.

"Ye'll be getting into the blockhouse as fast as possible," M'Nab whispered, as Mabel leaned over him to catch his dying words.

Then came over our heroine the full consciousness of her situation and of the necessity of exertion. She cast a rapid glance at the body at her feet, saw that it had ceased to breathe, and fled. It was but a few minutes' run to the blockhouse, the door of which Mabel had barely gained when it was closed violently in her face by Jennie, the soldier's

wife, who in blind terror thought only of her own safety. The reports of five or six rifles were heard while Mabel was calling out for admittance; and the additional terror they produced prevented the woman within from undoing quickly the very fastenings she had been so expert in applying. After a minute's delay, however, Mabel found the door reluctantly yielding to her constant pressure, and she forced her slender body through the opening the instant it was large enough to allow of its passage. By this time Mabel's heart ceased to beat tumultuously and she gained sufficient self-command to act collectedly. Instead of yielding to the almost convulsive efforts of her companion to close the door again, she held it open long enough to ascertain that none of her own party was in sight, or likely on the instant to endeavor to gain admission: then she allowed the opening to be shut. Her orders and proceedings now became more calm and rational. But a single bar was crossed, and Jennie was directed to stand in readiness to remove even that at any application from a friend. She then ascended the ladder to the room above, where by means of a loophole she was enabled to get as good a view of the island as the surrounding bushes would allow. Admonishing her associate below to be firm and steady, she made as careful an examination of the environs as her situation permitted.

To her great surprise, Mabel could not at first see a living soul on the island, friend or enemy. Neither Frenchman nor Indian was visible, though a small straggling white cloud that was floating before the wind told her in which quarter she ought to look for them. The rifles had been discharged from the direction of the island whence June had come, though whether the enemy were on that island, or had actually landed on her own, Mabel could not say. Going to the loop that commanded a view of the spot where M'Nab lay, her blood curdled at perceiving all three of his soldiers lying apparently lifeless at his side. These men had rushed to a common centre at the first alarm, and had been shot down almost simultaneously by the invisible foe whom the Corporal had affected to despise.

Neither Cap nor Lieutenant Muir was to be seen. With a beating heart, Mabel examined every opening through the trees, and ascended even to the upper story or garret of the blockhouse, where she got a full view of the whole island, so far as its covers would allow, but with no better success. She had expected to see the body of her uncle



lying on the grass like those of the soldiers, but it was nowhere visible. Turning towards the spot where the boat lay, Mabel saw that it was still fastened to the shore; and then she supposed that by some accident Muir had been prevented from effecting his retreat in that quarter. In short, the island lay in the quiet of the grave, the bodies of the soldiers rendering the scene as fearful as it was extraordinary.

"For God's holy sake, Mistress Mabel," called out the woman from below; for, though her fear had become too ungovernable to allow her to keep silence, our heroine's superior refinement, more than the regimental station of her father, still controlled her mode of address,—“Mistress Mabel, tell me if any of our friends are living! I think I hear groans that grow fainter and fainter, and fear that they will all be tomahawked!”

Mabel now remembered that one of the soldiers was this woman's husband, and she trembled at what might be the immediate effect of her sorrow, should his death become suddenly known to her. The groans, too, gave a little hope, though she feared they might come from her uncle, who lay out of view.

"Oh, tell me, Mistress Mabel, if you can anywhere see Sandy! If I could only let him know that I'm in safety, the guid man would be easier in his mind, whether free or a prisoner."

Sandy was Jennie's husband, and he lay dead in plain view of the loop from which our heroine was then looking.

"You no' tell me if you're seeing of Sandy," the woman repeated from below, impatient at Mabel's silence.

"There are some of our people gathered about the body of M'Nab," was the answer; for it seemed sacrilegious in her eyes to tell a direct untruth under the awful circumstances in which she was placed.

"Is Sandy amang them?" demanded the woman, in a voice that sounded appalling by its hoarseness and energy.

"He may be certainly; for I see one, two, three, four, and all in the scarlet coats of the regiment."

"Sandy!" called out the woman frantically; "why d'ye no' care for yoursal', Sandy? Come hither the instant, man, and share your wife's fortunes in weal or woe. It's no' a moment for your silly discipline and vain-glorious notions of honor! Sandy! Sandy!"

Mabel heard the bar turn, and then the door creaked on

its hinges. Expectation, not to say terror, held her in suspense at the loop, and she soon beheld Jennie rushing through the bushes in the direction of the cluster of the dead. It took the woman but an instant to reach the fatal spot. So sudden and unexpected had been the blow, that she in her terror did not appear to comprehend its weight. Some wild and half-frantic notion of a deception troubled her fancy, and she imagined that the men were trifling with her fears. She took her husband's hand, and it was still warm, while she thought a covert smile was struggling on his lip.

"Why will ye fool life away, Sandy?" she cried, pulling at the arm. "Ye'll all be murdered by these accursed Indians, and you no' takin' to the block like trusty soldiers! Awa'! awa'! and no' be losing the precious moments."

In her desperate efforts, the woman pulled the body of her husband in a way to cause the head to turn completely over, when the small hole in the temple, caused by the entrance of a rifle bullet, and a few drops of blood trickling over the skin, revealed the meaning of her husband's silence. As the horrid truth flashed in its full extent on her mind, the woman clasped her hands, gave a shriek that pierced the glades of every island near, and fell at length on the dead body of the soldier. Thrilling, heart-reaching, appalling as was that shriek, it was melody to the cry that followed it so quickly as to blend the sounds. The terrific war-whoop arose out of the covers of the island, and some twenty savages, horrible in their paint and the other devices of Indian ingenuity, rushed forward, eager to secure the coveted scalps. Arrowhead was foremost, and it was his tomahawk that brained the insensible Jennie; and her reeking hair was hanging at his girdle as a trophy in less than two minutes after she had quitted the blockhouse. His companions were equally active, and M'Nab and his soldiers no longer presented the quiet aspect of men who slumbered. They were left in their gore, unequivocally butchered corpses.

All this passed in much less time than has been required to relate it, and all this did Mabel witness. She had stood riveted to the spot, gazing on the whole horrible scene, as if enchained by some charm, nor did the idea of self or of her own danger once obtrude itself on her thoughts. But no sooner did she perceive the place where the men had fallen covered with savages, exulting in the success of their surprise, than it occurred to her that Jennie had left the

blockhouse door unbarred. Her heart beat violently, for that defence alone stood between her and immediate death, and she sprang toward the ladder with the intention of descending to make sure of it. Her foot had not yet reached the floor of the second story, however, when she heard the door grating on its hinges, and she gave herself up for lost. Sinking on her knees, the terrified but courageous girl endeavored to prepare herself for death, and to raise her thoughts to God. The instinct of life, however, was too strong for prayer, and while her lips moved, the jealous senses watched every sound beneath. When her ears heard the bars, which went on pivots secured to the centre of the door, turning into their fastenings, not one, as she herself had directed, with a view to admit her uncle should he apply, but all three, she started again to her feet, all spiritual contemplations vanishing in her actual temporal condition, and it seemed as if all her faculties were absorbed in the sense of hearing.

The thoughts are active in a moment so fearful. At first Mabel fancied that her uncle had entered the blockhouse, and she was about to descend the ladder and throw herself into his arms; then the idea that it might be an Indian, who had barred the door to shut out intruders while he plundered at leisure, arrested the movement. The profound stillness below was unlike the bold, restless movements of Cap, and it seemed to savor more of the artifices of an enemy. If a friend at all, it could only be her uncle or the Quartermaster; or the horrible conviction now presented itself to our heroine that to these two and herself were the whole party suddenly reduced, if, indeed, the two latter survived. This consideration held Mabel in check, and for full two minutes more a breathless silence reigned in the building. During this time the girl stood at the foot of the upper ladder, the trap which led to the lower opening on the opposite side of the floor; the eyes of Mabel were riveted on this spot, for she now began to expect to see at each instant the horrible sight of a savage face at the hole. This apprehension soon became so intense, that she looked about her for a place of concealment. The procrastination of the catastrophe she now fully expected, though it were only for a moment, afforded a relief. The room contained several barrels; and behind two of these Mabel crouched, placing here eyes at an opening by which she could still watch the trap. She made another effort to

pray; but the moment was too horrible for that relief. She thought, too, that she heard a low rustling, as if one were ascending the lower ladder with an effort at caution so great as to betray itself by its own excess; then followed a creaking that she was certain came from one of the steps of the ladder, which had made the same noise under her own light weight as she ascended. This was one of those instants into which are compressed the sensations of years of ordinary existence. Life, death, eternity, and extreme bodily pain were all standing out in bold relief from the plane of every-day occurrences; and she might have been taken at that moment for a beautiful pallid representation of herself, equally without motion and without vitality. But while such was the outward appearance of the form, never had there been a time in her brief career when Mabel heard more acutely, saw more clearly, or felt more vividly. As yet, nothing was visible at the trap, but her ears, rendered exquisitely sensitive by intense feeling, distinctly acquainted her that some one was within a few inches of the opening in the floor. Next followed the evidence of her eyes, which beheld the dark hair of an Indian rising so slowly through the passage that the movements of the head might be likened to that of the minute-hand of a clock; then came the dark skin and wild features, until the whole of the swarthy face had risen above the floor. The human countenance seldom appears to advantage when partially concealed; and Mabel imagined many additional horrors as she first saw the black, roving eyes and the expression of wildness as the savage countenance was revealed, as it might be, inch by inch; but when the entire head was raised above the floor, a second and a better look assured our heroine that she saw the gentle, anxious, and even handsome face of June.

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## CHAPTER XVI

It would be difficult to say which evinced the most satisfaction, when Mabel sprang to her feet and appeared in the centre of the room, our heroine, on finding that her visitor was the wife of Arrowhead, and not Arrowhead himself, or June, at discovering that her advice had been followed, and that the blockhouse contained the person she had so anxiously and almost hopelessly sought. They



embraced each other, and the unsophisticated Tuscarora woman laughed in her sweet accents as she held her friend at arm's length, and made certain of her presence.

"Blockhouse good," said the young Indian; "got no scalp."

"It is indeed good, June," Mabel answered, with a shudder, veiling her eyes at the same time, as if to shut out a view of the horrors she had so lately witnessed. "Tell me, for God's sake, if you know what has become of my dear uncle! I have looked in all directions without being able to see him."

"No here in blockhouse?" June asked, with some curiosity.

"Indeed he is not: I am quite alone in this place; Jennie, the woman who was with me, having rushed out to join her husband, and perishing for her imprudence."

"June know, June see; very bad, Arrowhead no feel for any wife; no feel for his own."

"Ah, June, your lie, at least, is safe!"

"Don't know; Arrowhead kill me, if he know all."

"God bless and protect you, June! He *will* bless and protect you for this humanity. Tell me what is to be done, and if my poor uncle is still living?"

"Don't know. Saltwater has boat; maybe he go on river."

"The boat is still on the shore, but neither my uncle nor the Quartermaster is anywhere to be seen."

"No kill, or June would see. Hide away! Red man hide; no shame for pale-face."

"It is not the shame that I fear for them, but the opportunity. Your attack was awfully sudden, June!"

"Tuscarora!" returned the other, smiling with exultation at the dexterity of her husband. "Arrowhead great warrior!"

"You are too good and gentle for this sort of life, June; you *cannot* be happy in such scenes?"

June's countenance grew clouded, and Mabel fancied there was some of the savage fire of a chief in her frown as she answered,—

"Yengeese too greedy, take away all hunting-grounds; chase Six Nation from morning to night; wicked king, wicked people. Pale-face very bad."

Mabel knew that, even in that distant day, there was much truth in this opinion, though she was too well instructed not to understand that the monarch, in this, as in a thousand other cases, was blamed for acts of which he was most

probably ignorant. She felt the justice of the rebuke, therefore, too much to attempt an answer, and her thoughts naturally reverted to her own situation.

"And what am I to do, June?" she demanded. "It cannot be long before your people will assault this building."

"Blockhouse good—got no scalp."

"But they will soon discover that it has got no garrison too, if they do not know it already. You yourself told me the number of people that were on the island, and doubtless you learned it from Arrowhead."

"Arrowhead know," answered June, holding up six fingers, to indicate the number of the men. "All red men know. Four lose scalp already; two got 'em yet."

"Do not speak of it, June; the horrid thought curdles my blood. Your people cannot know that I am alone in the blockhouse, but may fancy my uncle and the Quartermaster with me, and may set fire to the building, in order to dislodge them. They tell me that fire is the great danger to such places."

"No burn blockhouse," said June quietly.

"You cannot know that, my good June, and I have no means to keep them off."

"No burn blockhouse. Blockhouse good; got no scalp."

"But tell me why, June; I fear they will burn it."

"Blockhouse wet—much rain—logs green—no burn easy. Red man know it—fine t'ing—then no burn it to tell Yengeese that Iroquois been here. Fader come back, miss blockhouse, no found. No, no; Indian too much cunning; no touch anything."

"I understand you, June, and hope your prediction may be true; for, as regards my dear father, should he escape—perhaps he is already dead or captured, June?"

"No touch fader—don't know where he gone—water got no trail—red man can't follow. No burn blockhouse—blockhouse good; got no scalp."

"Do you think it possible for me to remain here safely until my father returns?"

"Don't know; daughter tell best when fader come back."

Mabel felt uneasy at the glance of June's dark eye as she uttered this; for the unpleasant surmise arose that her companion was endeavoring to discover a fact that might be useful to her own people, while it would lead to the destruction of her parent and his party. She was about to make

an evasive answer, when a heavy push at the outer door suddenly drew all her thoughts to the immediate danger.

"They come!" she exclaimed. "Perhaps, June, it is my uncle or the Quartermaster. I cannot keep out even Mr. Muir at a moment like this."

"Why no look? plenty loophole, made purpose."

Mabel took the hint, and, going to one of the downward loops, that had been cut through the logs in the part that overhung the basement, she cautiously raised the little block that ordinarily filled the small hole, and caught a glance at what was passing at the door. The start and changing countenance told her companion that some of her own people were below.

"Red man," said June, lifting a finger in admonition to be prudent.

"Four; and horrible in their paint and bloody trophies. Arrowhead is among them."

June had moved to a corner, where several spare rifles had been deposited, and had already taken one into her hand, when the name of her husband appeared to arrest her movements. It was but for an instant, however, for she immediately went to the loop, and was about to thrust the muzzle of the piece through it, when a feeling of natural aversion induced Mabel to seize her arm.

"No, no, no, June!" said the latter; "not against your own husband, though my life be the penalty."

"No hurt Arrowhead," returned June, with a slight shudder; "no hurt red man at all. No fire at 'em; only scare."

Mabel now comprehended the intention of June, and no longer opposed it. The latter thrust the muzzle of the rifle through the loophole; and, taking care to make noise enough to attract attention, she pulled the trigger. The piece had no sooner been discharged than Mabel reproached her friend for the very act that was intended to serve her.

"You declared it was not your intention to fire," she said, "and you may have destroyed your own husband."

"All run away before I fire," returned June, laughing, and going to another loop to watch the movements of her friends, laughing still heartier. "See! get cover—every warrior. Think Saltwater and Quartermaster here. Take good care now."

"Heaven be praised! And now, June, I may hope for a little time to compose my thoughts to prayer, that I may

not die like Jennie, thinking only of life and the things of the world."

June laid aside the rifle, and came and seated herself near the box on which Mabel had sunk, under that physical reaction which accompanies joy as well as sorrow. She looked steadily in our heroine's face, and the latter thought that her countenance had an expression of severity mingled with its concern.

"Arrowhead great warrior," said the Tuscarora's wife. "All the girls of tribe look at him much. The pale-face beauty has eyes too?"

"June!—what do these words—that look—imply? what would you say?"

"Why you so 'fraid June shoot Arrowhead?"

"Would it not have been horrible to see a wife destroy her own husband? No, June, rather would I have died myself."

"Very sure, dat all?"

"That was all, June, as God is my judge!—and surely that was enough. No, no! there have been sufficient horrors to-day, without increasing them by an act like this. What other motive can you suspect?"

"Don't know. Poor Tuscarora girl very foolish. Arrowhead great chief, and look all round him. Talk of pale-face beauty in his sleep. Great chief like many wives."

"Can a chief possess more than one wife, June, among your people?"

"Have as many as he can keep. Great hunter marry often. Arrowhead got only June now; but he look too much, see too much, talk too much of pale-face girl."

Mabel was conscious of this fact, which had distressed her not a little, in the course of their journey; but it shocked her to hear this allusion, coming, as it did, from the mouth of the wife herself. She knew that habit and opinions made great difference in such matters; but, in addition to the pain and mortification she experienced at being the unwilling rival of a wife, she felt an apprehension that jealousy would be but an equivocal guarantee for her personal safety in her present situation. A closer look at June, however, reassured her; for, while it was easy to trace in the unpractised features of this unsophisticated being the pain of blighted affections, no distrust could have tortured the earnest expression of her honest countenance into that of treachery or hate.

"You will not betray me, June?" Mabel said, pressing



the other's hand, and yielding to an impulse of generous confidence. "You will not give up one of your own sex to the tomahawk?"

"No tomahawk touch you. Arrowhead no let 'em. If June must have sister-wife, love to have you."

"No, June; my religion, my feelings, both forbid it; and, if I could be the wife of an Indian at all, I would never take the place that is yours in a wigwam."

"June sorry the Lily"—for so the Indian, in her poetical language, had named our heroine—"June sorry the Lily no marry Arrowhead. His wigwam big, and a great chief must get wives enough to fill it."

"I thank you, June, for this preference, which is not according to the notion of us white women," returned Mabel, smiling in spite of the fearful situation in which she was placed; "but I may not, probably never shall, marry at all." "Must have good husband," said June; "marry Eau-douce, if don't like Arrowhead."

"June! this is not a fit subject for a girl who scarcely knows if she is to live another hour or not. I would obtain some signs of my dear uncle's being alive and safe, if possible."

"June go see."

"Can you?—will you?—would it be safe for you to be seen on the island? is your presence known to the warriors, and would they be pleased to find a woman on the war-path with them?"

All this Mabel asked in rapid connection, fearing that the answer might not be as she wished. She had thought it extraordinary that June should be of the party, and, improbable as it seemed, she had fancied that the woman had covertly followed the Iroquois in her own canoe, and had got in their advance, merely to give her the notice which had probably saved her life. But in all this she was mistaken, as June, in her imperfect manner, now found means to let her know.

Arrowhead, though a chief, was in disgrace with his own people, and was acting with the Iroquois temporarily, though with a perfect understanding. He had a wigwam, it is true, but was seldom in it; feigning friendship for the English, he had passed the summer ostensibly in their service, while he was, in truth, acting for the French, and his wife journeyed with him in his many migrations, most of the distances being passed over in canoes. In a word, her presence was no secret, her husband seldom moving without

her. Enough of this to embolden Mabel to wish that her friend might go out, to ascertain the fate of her uncle, did June succeed in letting the other know; and it was soon settled between them that the Indian woman should quit the blockhouse with that object the moment a favorable opportunity offered.

June announced her intention to join her friends, when the moment came favorable for her to quit the blockhouse. Mabel felt some distrust as they descended the ladder; but at the next instant she was ashamed of the feeling, as unjust to her companion and unworthy of herself, and by the time they both stood on the ground her confidence was restored. The process of unbarring the door was conducted with the utmost caution, and when the last bar was ready to be turned June took her station near the spot where the opening must necessarily be. The bar was just turned free of the brackets, the door was opened merely wide enough to allow her body to pass, and June glided through the space. Mabel closed the door again, with a convulsive movement; and as the bar turned into its place, her heart beat audibly. She then felt secure; and the two other bars were turned down in a more deliberate manner. When all was fast again, she ascended to the first floor, where alone she could get a glimpse of what was going on without.

Long and painfully melancholy hours passed, during which Mabel had no intelligence from June. She heard the yells of the savages, for liquor had carried them beyond the bounds of precaution; occasionally caught glimpses of their mad orgies through the loops; and at all times was conscious of their fearful presence by sounds and sights that would have chilled the blood of one who had not so lately witnessed scenes so much more terrible. Toward the middle of the day, she fancied she saw a white man on the island, though his dress and wild appearance at first made her take him for a newly-arrived savage. A view of his face, although it was swarthy naturally, and much darkened by exposure, left no doubt that her conjecture was true; and she felt as if there was now one of a species more like her own present, and one to whom she might appeal for succor in the last emergency. Mabel little knew, alas! how small was the influence exercised by the whites over their savage allies, when the latter had begun to taste of blood; or how slight, indeed, was the disposition to divert them from their cruelties.

The day seemed a month by Mabel's computation, and the

only part of it that did not drag were the minutes spent in prayer. She had recourse to this relief from time to time; and at each effort she found her spirit firmer, her mind more tranquil, and her resignation more confirmed. She understood the reasoning of June, and believed it highly probable that the blockhouse would be left unmolested until the return of her father, in order to entice him into an ambuscade, and she felt much less apprehension of immediate danger in consequence; but the future offered little ground of hope, and her thoughts had already begun to calculate the chances of her captivity. At such moments, Arrowhead and his offensive admiration filled a prominent place in the background: for our heroine well knew that the Indians usually carried off to their villages, for the purposes of adoption, such captives as they did not slay; and that many instances had occurred in which individuals of her sex had passed the remainder of their lives in the wigwams of their conquerors. Such thoughts as these invariably drove her to her knees and to her prayers.

While the light lasted the situation of our heroine was sufficiently alarming; but as the shades of evening gradually gathered over the island, it became fearfully appalling. By this time the savages had wrought themselves up to the point of fury, for they had possessed themselves of all the liquor of the English; and their outcries and gesticulations were those of men truly possessed by evil spirits. All the efforts of their French leader to restrain them were entirely fruitless, and he had wisely withdrawn to an adjacent island, where he had a sort of bivouac, that he might keep at a safe distance from friends so apt to run into excesses. Before quitting the spot, however, this officer, at great risk to his own life, had succeeded in extinguishing the fire, and in securing the ordinary means to relight it. This precaution he took lest the Indians should burn the blockhouse, the preservation of which was necessary to the success of his future plans. He would gladly have removed all the arms also, but this he found impracticable, the warriors clinging to their knives and tomahawks with the tenacity of men who regarded a point of honor as long as a faculty was left; and to carry off the rifles, and leave behind him the very weapons that were generally used on such occasions, would have been an idle expedient. The extinguishing of the fire proved to be the most prudent measure; for no sooner was the officer's back

turned than one of the warriors in fact proposed to fire the blockhouse. Arrowhead had also withdrawn from the group of drunkards, as soon as he found that they were losing their senses, and had taken possession of a hut, where he had thrown himself on the straw, and sought the rest that two wakeful and watchful nights had rendered necessary. It followed that no one was left among the Indians to care for Mabel, if, indeed, any knew of her existence at all; and the proposal of the drunkard was received with yells of delight by eight or ten more as much intoxicated and habitually as brutal as himself.

This was the fearful moment for Mabel. The Indians, in their present condition, were reckless of any rifles that the blockhouse might hold, though they did retain dim recollections of its containing living beings, an additional incentive to their enterprise; and they approached its base whooping and leaping like demons. As yet they were excited, not overcome by the liquor they had drunk. The first attempt was made at the door, against which they ran in a body; but the solid structure, which was built entirely of logs, defied their efforts. The rush of a hundred men with the same object would have been useless. This Mabel, however, did not know; and her heart seemed to leap into her mouth as she heard the heavy shock at each renewed effort. At length when she found that the door resisted these assaults as if it were of stone, neither trembling nor yielding, and only betraying its not being a part of the wall by rattling a little on its heavy hinges, her courage revived, and she seized the first moment of a cessation to look down through the loop, in order, if possible, to learn the extent of her danger. A silence, for which it was not easy to account, stimulated her curiosity; for nothing is so alarming to those who are conscious of the presence of imminent danger, as to be unable to trace its approach.

Mabel found that two or three of the Iroquois had been raking the embers, where they had found a few small coals, and with these they were endeavoring to light a fire. The interest with which they labored, the hope of destroying, and the force of habit, enabled them to act intelligently and in unison, so long as their fell object was kept in view. A white man would have abandoned the attempt to light a fire in despair, with coals that came out of the ashes resembling sparks; but these children of the forest had many expedients that were unknown to civilization. By the aid



of a few dry leaves, which they alone knew where to seek, a blaze was finally kindled, and then the addition of a few light sticks made sure of the advantage that had been obtained. When Mabel stooped down over the loop, the Indians were making a pile of brush against the door, and as she remained gazing at their proceedings, she saw the twigs ignite, the flames dart from branch to branch, until the whole pile was cracking and snapping under a bright blaze. The Indians now gave a yell of triumph, and returned to their companions, well assured that the work of destruction was commenced. Mabel remained looking down, scarcely able to tear herself away from the spot, so intense and engrossing was the interest she felt in the progress of the fire. As the pile kindled throughout, however, the flames mounted, until they flashed so near her eyes as to compel her to retreat. Just as she reached the opposite side of the room, to which she had retired in her alarm, a forked stream shot up through the loophole, the lid of which she had left open, and illuminated the rude apartment, with Mabel and her desolation. Our heroine now naturally enough supposed that her hour was come; for the door, the only means of retreat, had been blocked up by the brush and fire, with hellish ingenuity, and she addressed herself, as she believed, for the last time to her Maker in prayer. Her eyes were closed, and for more than a minute her spirit was abstracted; but the interests of the world too strongly divided her feelings to be altogether suppressed; and when they involuntarily opened again, she perceived that the streak of flame was no longer flaring in the room, though the wood around the little aperture had kindled, and the blaze was slowly mounting under the impulsion of a current of air that sucked inward. A barrel of water stood in a corner; and Mabel, acting more by instinct than by reason, caught up a vessel, filled it, and, pouring it on the wood with a trembling hand, succeeded in extinguishing the fire at that particular spot. The smoke prevented her from looking down again for a couple of minutes; but when she did her heart beat high with delight and hope at finding that the pile of blazing brush had been overturned and scattered, and that water had been thrown on the logs of the door, which were still smoking though no longer burning.

"Who is there?" said Mabel, with her mouth at the loop. "What friendly hand has a merciful Providence sent to my succor?"

A light footstep was audible below, and one of those gentle pushes at the door was heard, which just moved the massive beams on the hinges.

"Who wishes to enter? It it you, dear, dear uncle?"

"Saltwater no here. St. Lawrence sweet water," was the answer. "Open quick; want to come in."

The step of Mabel was never lighter, or her movements more quick and natural, than while she was descending the ladder and turning the bars, for all her motions were earnest and active. This time she thought only of her escape, and she opened the door with a rapidity which did not admit of caution. Her first impulse was to rush into the open air, in the blind hope of quitting the blockhouse; but June repulsed the attempt, and entering, she coolly barred the door again before she would notice Mabel's eager efforts to embrace her.

"Bless you! bless you, June!" cried our heroine most fervently; "you are sent by Providence to be my guardian angel!"

"No hug so tight," answered the Tuscarora woman. "Pale-face woman all cry, or all laugh. Let June fasten door."

Mabel became more rational, and in a few minutes the two were again in the upper room, seated as before, hand in hand, all feeling of distrust between them being banished.

"Now tell me, June," Mabel commenced as soon as she had given and received one warm embrace, "have you seen or heard aught of my poor uncle?"

"Don't know. No one see him; no one hear him; no one know anyt'ing. Saltwater run into river, I t'ink, for I no find him. Quartermaster gone too. I look, and look, and look; but no see 'em, one, t'other, nowhere."

"Blessed be God! They must have escaped, though the means are not known to us. I thought I saw a Frenchman on the island, June."

"Yes: French captain come, but he go away too. Plenty of Indian on island."

"Oh, June, June, are there no means to prevent my beloved father from falling into the hands of his enemies?"

"Don't know; t'ing dat warriors wait in ambush, and Yengeese must lose scalp."

"Surely, surely, June, you, who have done so much for the daughter, will not refuse to help the father?"

"Don't know fader, don't lover fader. June help her own people, help Arrowhead—husband love scalp."

"June, this is not yourself. I cannot, will not believe that you wish to see our men murdered!"

June turned her dark eyes quietly on Mabel; and for a moment her look was stern, though it was soon changed into one of melancholy compassion.

"Lily, Yengeese girl?" she said, as one asked a question.

"Certainly, and as a Yengeese girl I would save my countrymen from slaughter."

"Very good, if can. June no Yengeese; June Tuscarora—got Tuscarora husband—Tuscarora heart—Tuscarora feeling—all over Tuscarora. Lily wouldn't run and tell French that her fader was coming to gain victory?"

"Perhaps not," returned Mabel, pressing a hand on a brain that felt bewildered,—“perhaps not; but you serve me, aid me—have saved me, June! Why have you done this, if you only feel as a Tuscarora?”

"Don't only feel as Tuscarora; feel as girl, feel as squaw. Love pretty Lily, and put it in my bosom."

Mabel melted into tears, and she pressed the affectionate creature to her heart. It was near a minute before she could renew the discourse, but then she succeeded in speaking more calmly and with greater coherence.

"Let me know the worst, June," said she. "To-night your people are feasting; what do they intend to do to-morrow?"

"Don't know; afraid to see Arrowhead, afraid to ask question; t'ink hide away till Yengeese come back."

"Will they not attempt anything against the block-house? You have seen what they can threaten if they will."

"To much rum. Arrowhead sleep, or no dare; French captain gone away, or no dare. All go to sleep now."

"And you think I am safe for this night, at least?"

"To much rum. If Lily like June, might do much for her people."

"I am like you, June, if a wish to serve my countrymen can make a resemblance with one as courageous as yourself."

"No, no, no!" muttered June in a low voice; "no got heart, and June no let you, if had. June's moder prisoner once, and warriors got drunk; moder tomahawked 'em all. Such de way red skin women do when people in danger and want scalp."

"You say what is true," returned Mabel, shuddering, and unconsciously dropping June's hand. "I cannot do

that. I have neither the strength, the courage, nor the will to dip my hands in blood."

"T'ink that too; then stay where you be—blockhouse good—got no scalp."

"You believe, then, that I am safe here, at least until my father and his people return?"

"Know so. No dare touch blockhouse in morning. Hark! all still now—drink rum till head fall down, and sleep like log."

"Might I not escape? Are there not several canoes on the island? Might I not get one, and go and give my father notice of what has happened?"

"Know how to paddle?" demanded June, glancing her eye furtively at her companion.

"Not so well as yourself, perhaps; but enough to get out of sight before morning."

"What do them?—couldn't paddle six—ten—eight mile!"

"I do not know; I would do much to warn my father, and the excellent Pathfinder, and all the rest, of the danger they are in."

"Like Pathfinder?"

"All like him who know him—you would like him, nay, love him, if you only knew his heart!"

"No like him at all. Too good rifle—too good eye—too much shoot Iroquois and June's people. Must get his scalp if can."

"And I must save it if I can, June. In this respect, then, we are opposed to each other. I will go and find a canoe the instant they are all asleep, and quit the island."

"No can—June won't let you. Call Arrowhead."

"June! you would not betray me—you would not give me up after all you have done for me?"

"Just so," returned June, making a backward gesture with her hand, and speaking with a warmth and earnestness Mabel had never witnessed in her before. "Call Arrowhead in loud voice. One call from wife wake a warrior up. June no let Lily help enemy—no let Indian hurt Lily."

"I understand you, June, and feel the nature and justice of your sentiments; and, after all, it were better that I should remain here, for I have most probably overrated my strength. But tell me one thing: if my uncle comes in the night, and asks to be admitted, you will let me open the door of the blockhouse that he may enter?"

"Sartain—he prisoner here, and June like prisoner bet-



ter than scalp; scalp good for honor, prisoner good for feeling. But Saltwater hide so close, he don't know where he be himself."

Here June laughed in her girlish, mirthful way, for to her scenes of violence were too familiar to leave impressions sufficiently deep to change her natural character.

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## CHAPTER XVII

THE exhaustion of the day required the restoration of the night and the two women fell in to a deep sleep that was not broken until daylight of the next morning.

The tranquillity of the night was not contradicted by the movements of the day. Although Mabel and June went to every loophole, not a sign of the presence of a living being on the island was at first to be seen, themselves excepted. There was a smothered fire on the spot where M'Nab and his comrades had cooked, as if the smoke which curled upwards from it was intended as a lure to the absent; and all around the huts had been restored to former order and arrangement. Mabel started involuntarily when her eye at length fell on a group of three men, dressed in the scarlet of the 55th, seated on the grass in lounging attitudes, as if they chatted in listless security; and her blood curdled as, on a second look, she traced the bloodless faces and glassy eyes of the dead. They were very near the blockhouse, so near indeed as to have been overlooked at the first eager inquiry, and there was a mocking levity in their postures and gestures, for their limbs were stiffening in different attitudes, intended to resemble life, at which the soul revolted. Still, horrible as these objects were to those near enough to discover the frightful discrepancy between their assumed and their real characters, the arrangement had been made with so much art that it would have deceived a negligent observer at the distance of a hundred yards. After carefully examining the shores of the island, June pointed out to her companion the fourth soldier, seated with his feet hanging over the water, his back fastened to a sapling, and holding a fishing-rod in his hand. The scalpless heads were covered with the caps, and all appearance of blood had been carefully washed from each countenance.

Mabel sickened at this sight, which not only did so much

violence to all her notions of propriety, but which was in itself so revolting and so opposed to natural feeling. She withdrew to a seat, and hid her face in her apron for several minutes, until a low call from June again drew her to a loophole. The latter then pointed out the body of Jennie, seemingly standing in the door of a hut, leaning forward as if to look at the group of men, her cap fluttering in the wind, and her hand grasping a broom. The distance was too great to distinguish the features very accurately; but Mabel fancied that the jaw had been depressed, as if to distort the mouth into a sort of horrible laugh.

"June! June!" she exclaimed; "this exceeds all I have ever heard, or imagined, as possible, in the treachery and artifices of your people."

"Tuscarora very cunning," said June, in a way to show that she rather approved of than condemned the uses to which the dead bodies had been applied. "Do soldier no harm now; do Iroquois good; got the scalp first; now make bodies work. By and by, burn 'em."

This speech told Mabel how far she was separated from her friend in character; and it was several minutes before she could again address her. But this temporary aversion was lost on June, who set about preparing their simple breakfast, in a way to show how insensible she was to feelings in others which her own habits taught her to discard. Mabel ate sparingly, and her companion as if nothing had happened. Then they had leisure again for their thoughts, and for further surveys of the island.

Throughout the livelong day not an Indian nor a Frenchman was to be seen, and night closed over the frightful but silent masquerade, with the steady and unalterable progress with which the earth obeys her laws, indifferent to the petty actors and petty scenes that are in daily bustle and daily occurrence on her bosom. The night was far more quiet than that which had preceded it, and Mabel slept with an increasing confidence; for she now felt satisfied that her own fate would not be decided upon until the return of her father. The following day he was expected, however, and when our heroine awoke, she ran eagerly to the loops in order to ascertain the state of the weather and the aspect of the skies, as well as the condition of the island. There lounged the fearful group on the grass; the fisherman still hung over the water, seemingly intent on his sport; and the distorted countenance of Jennie glared from out the

hut in horrible contortions. But the weather had changed; the wind blew fresh from the southward, and though the air was bland, it was filled with the elements of storm.

"This grows more and more difficult to bear, June," Mabel said, when she left the window. "I could even prefer to see the enemy than to look any longer on this fearful array of the dead."

"Hush! here they come. June thought hear a cry like a warrior's shout when he take a scalp."

"What mean you? There is no more butchery!—there *can* be no more."

"Saltwater!" exclaimed June, laughing, as she stood peeping through a loophole.

"My dear uncle! Thank God! he then lives! Oh, June, June, *you* must not let them harm *him*?"

"June, poor squaw. What warrior t'ink of what she say? Arrowhead bring him here."

By this time Mabel was at a loop; and, sure enough, there were Cap and the Quartermaster in the hands of the Indians, eight or ten of whom were conducting them to the foot of the block, for, by this capture, the enemy now well knew that there could be no man in the building. Mabel scarcely breathed until the whole party stood ranged directly before the door, when she was rejoiced to see that the French officer was among them. A low conversation followed, in which both the white leader and Arrowhead spoke earnestly to their captives, when the Quartermaster called out to her in a voice loud enough to be heard.

"Pretty Mabel! pretty Mabel!" said he; "look out of one of the loopholes, and pity our condition. We are threatened with instant death unless you open the door to the conquerors. Relent, then, or we'll no' be wearing our scalps half an hour from this blessed moment."

Mabel thought there were mockery and levity in this appeal, and its manner rather fortified than weakened her resolution to hold the place as long as possible.

"Speak to me, uncle," said she, with her mouth at a loop. "and tell me what I ought to do."

"Thank God! thank God!" ejaculated Cap; "the sound of your sweet voice, Magnet, lightens my heart of a heavy load, for I feared you had shared the fate of poor Jennie. My breast has felt the last four-and-twenty hours as if a ton of kentledge had been stowed in it. You ask me what you ought to do, child, and I do not know how to advise

you, though you are my own sister's daughter! The most I can say just now, my poor girl, is most heartily, to curse the day you or I ever saw this bit of fresh water."

"But, uncle, is your life in danger—do *you* think I ought to open the door?"

"A round turn and two half-hitches make a fast belay; and I would counsel no more who is out of the hands of these devils to unbar or unfasten anything in order to fall into them. As to the Quartermaster and myself, we are both elderly men, and not of much account to mankind in general, as honest Pathfinder would say; and it can make no great odds to him whether he balances the purser's books this year or the next; and as for myself, why, if I were on the seaboard, I should know what to do, but up here, in this watery wilderness, I can only say, that if I were behind that bit of a bulwark, it would take a good deal of Indian logic to rouse me out of it."

"You'll no' be minding all your uncle says, pretty Mabel," put in Muir, "for distress is obviously fast unsettling his faculties, and he is far from calculating all the necessities of the emergency. We are in the hands here of very considerate and gentlemanly pairsons, it must be acknowledged, and one has little occasion to apprehend disagreeable violence. The casualties that have occurred are the common incidents of war, and can no' change our sentiments of the enemy, for they are far from indicating that any injustice will be done the prisoners. I'm sure that neither Master Cap nor myself has any cause of complaint since we have given ourselves up to Master Arrowhead, who reminds me of a Roman or a Spartan by his virtues and moderation; but ye'll be remembering that usages differ, and that our scalps may be lawful sacrifices to appease the manes of fallen foes, unless you save them by capitulation."

"I shall be wiser to keep within the blockhouse until the fate of the island is settled," returned Mabel. "Our enemies can feel no concern on account of one like me, knowing that I can do them no harm, and I greatly prefer to remain here as more befitting my sex and years."

"If nothing but your convenience were concerned, Mabel, we should all cheerfully acquiesce in your wishes, but these gentlemen fancy that the work will aid their operations, and they have a strong desire to possess it. To be frank with you, finding myself and your uncle in a very peculiar



situation, I acknowledge that, to avert consequences, I have assumed the power that belongs to his Majesty's commission, and entered into a verbal capitulation, by which I have engaged to give up the blockhouse and the whole island. It is the fortune of war, and must be submitted to; so open the door, pretty Mabel, forthwith, and confide yourself to the care of those who know how to treat beauty and virtue in distress. There's no courtier in Scotland more complaisant than this chief, or who is more familiar with the laws of decorum."

"No leave blockhouse," muttered June, who stood at Mabel's side, attentive to all that passed. "Blockhouse good—got no scalp."

Our heroine might have yielded but for this appeal; for it began to appear to her that the wisest course would be to conciliate the enemy by concessions instead of exasperating them by resistance. They must know that Muir and her uncle were in their power; that there was no man in the building, and she fancied they might proceed to batter down the door, or cut their way through the logs with axes, if she obstinately refused to give them peaceable admission, since there was no longer any reason to dread the rifle. But the words of June induced her to hesitate, and the earnest pressure of the hand and entreating looks of her companion strengthened a resolution that was faltering.

"No prisoner yet," whispered June; "let 'em make prisoner before 'ey take prisoner—talk big; June manage 'em."

Mabel now began to parley more resolutely with Muir, for her uncle seemed disposed to quiet his conscience by holding his tongue, and she plainly intimated that it was not her intention to yield the building.

"You forget the capitulation, Mistress Mabel," said Muir; "the honor of one of his Majesty's servants is concerned, and the honor of his Majesty through his servant. You will remember the finesse and delicacy that belong to military honor?"

"I know enough, Mr. Muir, to understand that you have no command in this expedition, and therefore can have no right to yield the blockhouse; and I remember, moreover, to have heard my dear father say that a prisoner loses all his authority for the time being."

"Rank sophistry, pretty Mabel, and treason to the king, as well as dishonoring his commission and discrediting his

name. You'll no' be persevering in your intentions, when your better judgment has had leisure to reflect and to make conclusions on matters and circumstances."

"Ay," put in Cap, "this is a circumstance, and be d—d to it!"

"No mind what'e uncle say," ejaculated June, who was occupied in a far corner of the room: "Blockhouse good—got no scalp."

"I shall remain as I am, Mr. Muir, until I get some tidings of my father. He will return in the course of the next ten days."

"Ah, Mabel, this artifice will no' deceive the enemy, who, by means that would be unintelligible, did not our suspicions rest on an unhappy young man with too much plausibility, are familiar with all our doings and plans, and well know that the sun will not set before the worthy Sergeant and his companions will be in their power. Aweel! Submission to Providence is truly a Christian virtue!"

"Mr. Muir, you appear to be deceived in the strength of this work, and to fancy it weaker than it is. Do you desire to see what I can do in the way of defence, if so disposed?"

"I dinna mind if I do," answered the Quartermaster, who always grew Scotch as he grew interested.

"What do you think of that, then? Look at the loop of the upper story?"

As soon as Mabel had spoken, all eyes were turned upward, and beheld the muzzle of a rifle cautiously thrust through a hole, June having resorted again to a *ruse* which had already proved so successful. The result did not disappoint expectation. No sooner did the Indians catch a sight of the fatal weapon than they leaped aside, and in less than a minute every man among them had sought a cover. The French officer kept his eye on the barrel of the piece in order to ascertain that it was not pointed in his particular direction, and he coolly took a pinch of snuff. As neither Muir nor Cap had anything to apprehend from the quarter in which the others were menaced, they kept their ground.

"Be wise, my pretty Mabel, be wise!" exclaimed the former; "and no' be provoking useless contention. In the name of all the kings of Albin, who have ye closeted with you in that wooden tower that seemeth so bloody-minded?"

There is necromancy about this matter, and all our characters may be involved in the explanation."

"What do you think of the Pathfinder, Master Muir, for a garrison to so strong a post?" cried Mabel, resorting to an equivocation which the circumstances rendered very excusable. "What will your French and Indian companions think of the aim of the Pathfinder's rifle?"

"Bear gently on the unfortunate, pretty Mabel, and do not confound the king's servants—may Heaven bless him and all his royal lineage!—with the king's enemies. If Pathfinder be indeed in the blockhouse, let him speak, and we will hold our negotiations directly with him. He knows us as friends, and we fear no evil at his hands, and least of all to myself; for a generous mind is apt to render rivalry in a certain interest a sure ground of respect and amity, since admiration of the same women proves a community of feeling and tastes."

The reliance on Pathfinder's friendship did not extend beyond the Quartermaster and Cap, however, for even the French officer, who had hitherto stood his ground so well, shrank back at the sound of the terrible name. So unwilling, indeed, did this individual, a man of iron nerves, and one long accustomed to the dangers of the peculiar warfare in which he was engaged, appear to remain exposed to the assaults of Killdeer that he did not disdain to seek a cover, insisting that his two prisoners should follow him. Mabel was too glad to be rid of her enemies to lament the departure of her friends, though she kissed her hand to Cap through the loop, and called out to him in terms of affection as he moved slowly and unwillingly away.

The enemy now seemed disposed to abandon all attempts on the blockhouse for the present; and June, who had ascended to a trap in the roof, whence the best view was to be obtained, reported that the whole party had assembled to eat, on a distant and sheltered part of the island, where Muir and Cap were quietly sharing in the good things which were going, as if they had no concern on their minds. This information greatly relieved Mabel, and she began to turn her thoughts again to the means of effecting her own escape, or at least of letting her father know of the danger that awaited him. The Sergeant was expected to return that afternoon, and she knew that a moment gained or lost might decide his fate.

Three or four hours flew by. The island was again buried

in a profound quiet, the day was wearing away, and yet Mabel had decided on nothing. June was in the basement, preparing their frugal meal, and Mabel herself had ascended to the roof, which was provided with a trap that allowed her to go out on the top of the building, whence she commanded the best view of surrounding objects that the island possessed; still it was limited, and much obstructed by the tops of trees. The anxious girl did not dare to trust her person in sight, knowing well that the unrestrained passions of some savage might induce him to send a bullet through her brain. She merely kept her head out of the trap, therefore, whence, in the course of the afternoon, she made many surveys of the different channels about the island.

The sun had actually set; no intelligence had been received from the boats, and Mabel ascended to the roof to take a last look, hoping that the party would arrive in the darkness; which would at least prevent the Indians from rendering their ambuscade so fatal as it might otherwise prove, and which possibly might enable her to give some more intelligible signal, by means of fire, than it would otherwise be in her power to do. Her eye had turned carefully round the whole horizon, and she was just on the point of drawing in her person, when an object that struck her as new caught her attention. The islands lay grouped so closely, that six or eight different channels or passages between them were in view; and in one of the most covered, concealed in a great measure by the bushes of the shore, lay what a second look assured her was a bark canoe. It contained a human being beyond a question. Confident that if an enemy her signal could do no harm, and, if a friend, that it might do good, the eager girl waved a little flag towards the stranger, which she had prepared for her father, taking care that it should not be seen from the island.

Mabel had repeated her signal eight or ten times in vain, and she began to despair of its being noticed, when a sign was given in return by the wave of a paddle, and the man so far discovered himself as to let her see it was Chingachgook. Here, then, at last, was a friend; one, too, who was able, and she doubted not would be willing to aid her. From that instant her courage and her spirits revived. The Mohican had seen her; must have recognized her, as he knew that she was of the party; and no doubt, as soon as it was sufficiently dark, he would take the steps necessary to release her. That he was aware of the presence of the



enemy was apparent by the great caution he observed, and she had every reliance on his prudence and address. The principal difficulty now existed with June; for Mabel had seen too much of her fidelity to her own people, relieved as it was by sympathy for herself, to believe she would consent to a hostile Indian's entering the blockhouse, or indeed to her leaving it, with a view to defeat Arrowhead's plans. The half-hour which succeeded the discovery of the presence of the Great Serpent was the most painful of Mabel Dunham's life. She saw the means of effecting all she wished, as it might be within reach of her hand, and yet it eluded her grasp. She knew June's decision and coolness, notwithstanding all her gentleness and womanly feeling; and at last she came reluctantly to the conclusion that there was no other way of attaining her end than by deceiving her tried companion and protector. It was revolting to one so sincere and natural, so pure of heart, and so much disposed to ingenuousness as Mabel Dunham, to practise deception on a friend like June; but her own father's life was at stake, her companion would receive no positive injury, and she had feelings and interests directly touching herself which would have removed greater scruples.

As soon as it was dark, Mabel's heart began to beat with increased violence; and she adopted and changed her plan of proceeding at least a dozen times in a single hour. June was always the source of her greatest embarrassment; for she did not well see, first, how she was to ascertain when Chingachgook was at the door, where she doubted not he would soon appear; and, secondly, how she was to admit him, without giving the alarm to her watchful companion. Time pressed, however; for the Mohican might come and go away again, unless she was ready to receive him. It would be too hazardous to the Delaware to remain long on the island; and it became absolutely necessary to determine on some course, even at the risk of choosing one that was indiscreet. After running over various projects in her mind, therefore, Mabel came to her companion, and said, with as much calmness as she could assume,—

"Are you not afraid, June, now your people believe Pathfinder is in the blockhouse, that they will come and try to set it on fire?"

"No t'ink such t'ing. No burn blockhouse. Blockhouse good; got no scalp."

"June, we cannot know. They hid because they be-

lieved what I told them of Pathfinder's being with us."

"Believe fear. Fear come quick, go quick. Fear make run away; wit make come back. Fear make warrior fool, as well as young girl."

Here June laughed, as her sex is apt to laugh when anything particularly ludicrous crosses their youthful fancies.

"I feel uneasy, June; and wish you yourself would go up again to the roof and look out upon the island, to make certain that nothing is plotting against us; you know the signs of what your people intend to do better than I."

"June go, Lily wish; but very well know that Indian sleep; wait for 'e fader. Warrior eat, drink, sleep, all time, when don't fight and go on war-trail. Den never sleep, eat, drink—never feel. Warrior sleep now."

"God send it may be so! but go up, dear June, and look well about you. Danger may come when we least expect it."

June arose, and prepared to ascend to the roof; but she paused, with her foot on the first round of the ladder. Mabel's heart beat so violently that she was fearful its throbs would be heard; and she fancied that some gleamings of her real intentions had crossed the mind of her friend. She was right in part, the Indian woman having actually stopped to consider whether there was any indiscretion in what she was about to do. At first the suspicion that Mabel intended to escape flashed across her mind; then she rejected it, on the ground that the pale-face had no means of getting off the island, and that the block-house was much the most secure place she could find. The next thought was, that Mabel had detected some sign of the near approach of her father. This idea, too, lasted but an instant; for June entertained some such opinion of her companion's ability to understand symptoms of this sort—symptoms that had escaped her own sagacity—as a woman of high fashion entertains of the accomplishments of her maid. Nothing else in the same way offering, she began slowly to mount the ladder.

Just as she reached the upper floor, a lucky thought suggested itself to our heroine; and, by expressing it in a hurried but natural manner, she gained a great advantage in executing her projected scheme.

"I will go down," she said, "and listen by the door, June, while you are on the roof; and we will thus be on our guard, at the same time, above and below."

Though June thought this savored of unnecessary caution,

well knowing that no one could enter the building unless aided from within, nor any serious danger menace them from the exterior without giving sufficient warning, she attributed the proposition to Mabel's ignorance and alarm; and, as it was made apparently with frankness, it was received without distrust. By these means our heroine was enabled to descend to the door, as her friend ascended to the roof. The distance between the two was now too great to admit of conversation; and for three or four minutes one was occupied in looking about her as well as the darkness would allow, and the other in listening at the door with as much intentness as if all her senses were absorbed in the single faculty of hearing.

June discovered nothing from her elevated stand; the obscurity indeed almost forbade the hope of such a result; but it would not be easy to describe the sensation with which Mabel thought she perceived a slight and guarded push against the door. Fearful that all might not be as she wished, and anxious to let Chingachgook know that she was near, she began, though in tremulous and low notes, to sing. So profound was the stillness of the moment that the sound of the unsteady warbling ascended to the roof, and in a minuate June began to descend. A slight tap at the door was heard immediately after. Mabel was bewildered, for there was no time to lose. Hope proved stronger than fear; and with unsteady hands she commenced unbarring the door. The moccasin of June was heard on the floor above her when only a single bar was turned. The second was released as her form reached half-way down the lower ladder.

"What you do?" exclaimed June angrily. "Run away—mad—leave blockhouse; blockhouse good." The hands of both were on the last bar, and it would have been cleared from the fastenings but for a vigorous shove from without, which jammed the wood. A short struggle ensued, though both were disinclined to violence. June would probably have prevailed, had not another and a more vigorous push from without forced the bar past the trifling impediment that held it, when the door opened. The form of a man was seen to enter; and both the females rushed up the ladder, as if equally afraid of the consequences. The stranger secured the door; and, first examining the lower room with great care, he cautiously ascended the ladder. June, as soon as it became dark, had closed the loops of the prin-

cipal floor, and lighted a candle. By means of this dim taper, then, the two females stood in expectation, waiting to ascertain the person of their visitor, whose wary ascent of the ladder was distinctly audible, though sufficiently deliberate. It would not be easy to say which was the more astonished on finding, when the stranger had got through the trap, that Pathfinder stood before them.

"God be praised!" Mabel exclaimed, for the idea that the blockhouse would be impregnable with such a garrison at once crossed her mind. "O Pathfinder! what has become of my father?"

"The Sergeant is safe as yet, and victorious; though it is not in the gift of man to say what will be the end of it. Is not that the wife of Arrowhead skulking in the corner there?"

"Speak not of her reproachfully, Pathfinder; I owe her my life, my present security. Tell me what has happened to my father's party—why you are here; and I will relate all the horrible events that have passed upon this island."

"Few words will do the last, Mabel; for one used to Indian devilries needs but little explanations on such a subject. Everything turned out as we had hoped with the expedition; for the Sarpent was on the look-out, and he met us with all the information heart could desire. We ambushed three boats, drove the Frenchers out of them, got possession and sunk them, according to orders, in the deepest part of the channel; and the savages of Upper Canada will fare badly for Indian goods this winter. Both powder and ball, too, will be scarcer among them than keen hunters and active warriors may relish. We did not lose a man or have even a skin barked; nor do I think the enemy suffered to speak of. In short, Mabel, it has been just such an expedition as Lundie likes; much harm to the foe, and little harm to ourselves."

"Ah, Pathfinder, I fear, when Major Duncan comes to hear the whole of the sad tale, he will find reason to regret he ever undertook the affair."

"I know what you mean, I know what you mean; but by telling my story straight you will understand it better. As soon as the Sergeant found himself successful, he sent me and the Sarpent off in canoes to tell you how matters had turned out, and he is following with the two boats, which, being so much heavier, cannot arrive before morning. I parted from Chingachgook this forenoon, it being



agreed that he should come up one set of channels, and I another, to see that the path was clear. I've not seen the chief since."

Mabel now explained the manner in which she had discovered the Mohican, and her expectation that he would yet come to the blockhouse.

"Not he, not he! A regular scout will never get behind walls or logs so long as he can keep the open air and find useful employment. I should not have come myself, Mabel, but I promised the Sergeant to comfort you and to look after your safety. Ah's me! I reconnoitred the island with a heavy heart this forenoon; and there was a bitter hour when I fancied you might be among the slain.

"By what lucky accident were you prevented from paddling up boldly to the island and from falling into the hands of the enemy?"

"By such an accident, Mabel, as Providence employs to tell the hound where to find the deer and the deer how to throw off the hound. No, no! these artifices and devilries with dead bodies may deceive the soldiers of the 55th and the king's officers; but they are all lost upon men who have passed their days in the forest. I came down the channel in face of the pretended fisherman; and, though the riptyles have set up the poor wretch with art, it was not ingenious enough to take in a practysed eye. The rod was held too high, for the 55th have learned to fish at Oswego, if they never knew how before; and then the man was too quiet for one who got neither prey nor bite. But we never come in upon a post blindly; and I have lain outside a garrison a whole night, because they had changed their sentries and their mode of standing guard. Neither the Sarpent nor myself would be likely to be taken in by these clumsy contrivances, which were most probably intended for the Scotch, who are cunning enough in some particulars, though anything but witches when Indian sarcumventions are in the wind."

"Do you think my father and his men may yet be deceived?" said Mabel quickly.

"Not if I can prevent it, Mabel. You say the Sarpent is on the look-out too; so there is a double chance of our succeeding in letting him know his danger; though it is by no means sartain by which channel the party may come."

"Pathfinder," said our heroine solemnly, for the frightful scenes she had witnessed had clothed death with un-

usual horrors,—“Pathfinder, you have professed love for me, a wish to make me your wife?”

“I did venture to speak on that subject, Mabel, and the Sergeant has even lately said that you are kindly disposed; but I am not a man to persecute the thing I love.”

“Hear me, Pathfinder, I respect you, honor you, revere you; save my father from this dreadful death, and I can worship you. Here is my hand, as a solemn pledge for my faith, when you come to claim it.”

“Bless you, bless you, Mabel; this is more than I deserve—more, I fear, than I shall know how to profit by as I ought. It was not wanting, however, to make me serve the Sergeant. We are old comrades, and owe each other a life; though I fear me, Mabel, being a father’s comrade is not always the best recommendation with a daughter.”

“You want no other recommendation than your own acts—your courage, your fidelity. All that you do and say, Pathfinder, my reason approves, and the heart will, nay, it *shall* follow.”

“This is a happiness I little expected this night; but we are in God’s hands, and He will protect us in His own way. These are sweet words, Mabel; but they were not wanting to make me do all that man can do in the present circumstances; they will not lessen my endeavors, neither.”

“Now we understand each other, Pathfinder,” Mabel added hoarsely, “let us not lose one of the precious moments, which may be of incalculable value. Can we not get into your canoe and go and meet my father?”

“That is not the course I advise. I don’t know by which channel the Sergeant will come, and there are twenty; rely on it, the Serpent will be winding his way through them all. No, no! my advice is to remain here. The logs of this block-house are still green, and it will not be easy to set them on fire; and I can make good the place, bating a burning, ag’in a tribe. The Iroquois nation cannot dislodge me from this fortress, so long as we can keep the flames off it. The Sergeant is now ‘camped on some island, and will not come in until morning. If we hold the block, we can give him timely warning, by firing rifles, for instance; and should he determine to attack the savages, as a man of his temper will be very likely to do, the possession of this building will be of great account in the affair. No, no! my judgment says remain, if the object be to serve the Sergeant, though escape for our two selves will be no very difficult matter.”

"Stay," murmured Mabel, "stay, for God's sake, Pathfinder! Anything, everything to save my father!"

"Yes, that is natur'. I am glad to hear you say this, Mabel, for I own a wish to see the Sergeant fairly supported. As the matter now stands, he has gained himself credit; and, could he once drive off these miscreants, and make an honorable retreat, laying the huts and block in ashes, no doubt, Lundie would remember it and sarve him accordingly. Yes, yes, Mabel, we must not only save the Sergeant's life, but we must save his reputation."

"No blame can rest on my father on account of the surprise of this island."

"There's no telling, there's no telling; military glory is a most unsartain thing. I've seen the Delawares routed, when they desarved more credit than at other times when they've carried the day. A man is wrong to set his head on success of any sort, and worst of all on success in war.

"My father could not have suspected that the position of the island was known to the enemy," resumed Mabel, whose thoughts were running on the probable effect of the recent events on the Sergeant.

"That is true; nor do I well see how the Frenchers found it out. The spot is well chosen, and it is not an easy matter, even for one who has travelled the road to and from it, to find it again. There has been treachery, I fear; yes, yes, there must have been treachery."

"Oh, Pathfinder! can this be?"

"Nothing is easier, Mabel, for treachery comes as nat'ral to some men as eating. Now when I find a man all fair words I look close to his deeds; for when the heart is right, and really intends to do good, it is generally satisfied to let the conduct speak instead of the tongue."

"Jasper Western is not one of these," said Mabel impetuously. "No youth can be more sincere in his manner, or less apt to make the tongue act for the head."

"Jasper Western! tongue and heart are both right with that lad, depend on it, Mabel; and the notion taken up by Lundie, and the Quartermaster, and the Sergeant, and your uncle too, is as wrong as it would be to think that the sun shone by night and the stars shone by day. No, no; I'll answer for Eau-douce's honesty with my own scalp, or, need, with my own rifle."

"Bless you, bless you, Pathfinder!" exclaimed Mabel, extending her own hand and pressing the iron fingers of

her companion, under a state of feeling that far surpassed her own consciousness of its strength. "You are all that is generous, all that is noble! God will reward you for it."

"Ah, Mabel, I fear me, if this be true, I should not covet such a wife as yourself; but would leave you to be sued for by some gentleman of the garrison, as your desarts require."

"We will not talk of this any more to-night," Mabel answered in a voice so smothered as to seem nearly choked. "We must think less of ourselves just now, Pathfinder, and more of our friends. But I rejoice from my soul that you believe Jasper innocent. Now let us talk of other things—ought we not to release June?"

"I've been thinking about the woman; for it will not be safe to shut our eyes and leave hers open, on this side of the blockhouse door. If we put her in the upper room, and take away the ladder, she'll be a prisoner at least."

"I cannot treat one thus who has saved my life. It would be better to let her depart, for I think she is too much my friend to do anything to harm me."

"You do not know the race, Mabel, you do not know the race. It's true she's not a full-blooded Mingo, but she consorts with the vagabonds, and must have larned some of their tricks. What is that?"

"It sounds like oars; some boat is passing through the channel."

Pathfinder closed the trap that led to the lower room, to prevent June from escaping, extinguished the candle, and went hastily to a loop, Mabel looking over his shoulder in breathless curiosity. These several movements consumed a minute or two; and by the time the eye of the scout had got a dim view of things without, two boats had swept past and shot up to the shore, at a spot some fifty yards beyond the block, where there was a regular landing. The obscurity prevented more from being seen; and Pathfinder whispered to Mabel that the new-comers were as likely to be foes as friends, for he did not think her father could possibly have arrived so soon. A number of men were now seen to quit the boats, and then followed three hearty English cheers, leaving no further doubts of the character of the party. Pathfinder sprang to the trap, raised it, glided down the ladder, and began to unbar the door, with an earnestness that proved how critical he deemed the moment. Mabel had followed, but she rather impeded than aided his exertions,



and but a single bar was turned when a heavy discharge of rifles was heard. They were still standing in breathless suspense, as the war-whoop rang in all the surrounding thickets. The door now opened, and both Pathfinder and Mabel rushed into the open air. All human sounds had ceased. After listening half a minute, however, Pathfinder thought he heard a few stifled groans near the boats; but the wind blew so fresh, and the rustling of the leaves mingled so much with the murmurs of the passing air, that he was far from certain. But Mabel was borne away by her feelings, and she rushed by him, taking the way towards the boats.

"This will not do, Mabel," said the scout in an earnest but low voice, seizing her by an arm; "this will never do. Sartain death would follow, and that without saving any one. We must return to the block."

"Father! my poor, dear, murdered father!" said the girl wildly, though habitual caution, even at that trying moment, induced her to speak low. "Pathfinder, if you love me, let me go to my dear father."

"This will not do, Mabel. It is singular that no one speaks; no one returns the fire from the boats; and I have left Kildeer in the block! But of what use would a rifle be when no one is to be seen?"

At that moment the quick eye of Pathfinder, which, while he held Mabel firmly in his grasp, had never ceased to roam over the dim scene, caught an indistinct view of five or six dark crouching forms, endeavoring to steal past him, doubtless with the intention of intercepting the retreat to the block-house. Catching up Mabel, and putting her under an arm, as if she were an infant, the sinewy frame of the woodsman was exerted to the utmost, and he succeeded in entering the building. The tramp of his pursuers seemed immediately at his heels. Dropping his burden, he turned, closed the door, and had fastened one bar, as a rush against the solid mass threatened to force it from the hinges. To secure the other bars was the work of an instant.

Mabel now ascended to the first floor, while Pathfinder remained as a sentinel below. Our heroine was in that state in which the body exerts itself, apparently without the control of the mind. She relighted the candle mechanically, as her companion had desired, and returned with it below, where he was waiting her reappearance. No sooner was Pathfinder in possession of the light than he examined the place carefully, to make certain no one was concealed in

the fortress, ascending to each floor in succession, after assuring himself that he left no enemy in his rear. The result was the conviction that the blockhouse now contained no one but Mabel and himself, June having escaped. When perfectly convinced on this material point, Pathfinder rejoined our heroine in the principal apartment, setting down the light and examining the priming of Killdeer before he seated himself.

"Our worst fears are realized!" said Mabel, to whom the hurry and excitement of the last five minutes appeared to contain the emotions of a life. "My beloved father and all his party are slain or captured!"

"We don't know that—morning will tell us all. I do not think the affair so settled as that, or we should hear the vagabond Mingos yelling out their triumph around the blockhouse. Of one thing we may be sartain; if the inimy has really got the better, he will not be long in calling upon us to surrender. The squaw will let him into the secret of our situation; and, as they well know the place cannot be fired by daylight, so long as Killdeer continues to deserve his reputation, you may depend on it that they will not be backward in making their attempt while darkness helps them."

"Surely I hear a groan!"

"'Tis fancy, Mabel; when the mind gets to be skeary, especially a' woman's mind, she often conceits things that have no reality. I've known them that imagined there was truth in dreams."

"Nay, I am *not* deceived; there is surely one below, and in pain."

Pathfinder was compelled to own that the quick senses of Mabel had not deceived her. He cautioned her, however, to repress her feelings; and reminded her that the savages were in the practice of resorting to every artifice to attain their ends, and that nothing was more likely than that the groans were feigned with a view to lure them from the blockhouse, or, at least, to induce them to open the door.

"No, no, no!" said Mabel hurriedly; "there is no artifice in those sounds, and they come from anguish of body, if not of spirit. They are fearfully natural."

"Well, we shall soon know whether a friend is there or not. Hide the light again, Mabel, and I will speak the person from a loop."

Not a little precaution was necessary, according to Pathfinder's judgment and experience, in performing even this simple act; for he had known the careless slain by their want of proper attention to what might have seemed to the ignorant supererogatory means of safety. He did not place his mouth to the loop itself, but so near it that he could be heard without raising his voice, and the same precaution was observed as regards his ear.

"Who is below?" Pathfinder demanded, when his arrangements were made to his mind. "Is any one in suffering? If a friend, speak boldly, and depend on our aid."

"Pathfinder!" answered a voice that both Mabel and the person addressed at once knew to be the Sergeant's,—"Pathfinder, in the name of God, tell me what has become of my daughter."

"Father, I am here, unhurt, safe! and oh that I could think the same of you!"

The ejaculation of thanksgiving that followed was distinctly audible to the two, but it was clearly mingled with a groan of pain.

"My worst forebodings are realized!" said Mabel with a sort of desperate calmness. "Pathfinder, my father must be brought within the block, though we hazard everything to do it."

"This is natur', and it is the law of God. But, Mabel, be calm, and endeavor to be cool. All that can be effected for the Sergeant by human invention shall be done. I only ask you to be cool."

"I am, I am, Pathfinder. Never in my life was I more calm, more collected, than at this moment. But remember how perilous may be every instant; for Heaven's sake, what we do, let us do without delay."

Pathfinder was struck with the firmness of Mabel's tones, and perhaps he was a little deceived by the forced tranquillity and self-possession she had assumed. At all events, he did not deem any further explanations necessary, but descended forthwith, and began to unbar the door. This delicate process was conducted with the usual caution, but, as he warily permitted the mass of timber to swing back on the hinges, he felt a pressure against it, that had nearly induced him to close it again. But, catching a glimpse of the cause through the crack, the door was permitted to swing back, when the body of Sergeant Dunham, which was propped against it, fell partly within the block.

to draw in the legs and secure the fastenings occupied the Pathfinder but a moment. Then there existed no obstacle to their giving their undivided care to the wounded man.

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## CHAPTER XVIII

THE eyes of Sergeant Dunham had not ceased to follow the form of his beautiful daughter from the moment that the light appeared. He next examined the door of the block, to ascertain its security; for he was left on the ground below, there being no available means of raising him to the upper floor. Then he sought the face of Mabel; for as life wanes fast the affections resume their force, and we begin to value that most which we feel we are about to lose for ever.

"God be praised, my child! you, at least, have escaped their murderous rifles," he said; for he spoke with strength, and seemingly with no additional pain. "Give me the history of this sad business, Pathfinder."

"Ah's me, Sergeant! it *has* been sad, as you say. That there has been treachery, and the position of the island has been betrayed, is now as sartain, in my judgment, as that we still hold the block. But——"

"Major Duncan was right," interrupted Dunham, laying a hand on the other's arm.

"Not in the sense you mean, Sergeant—no, not in that p'int of view; never! At least, not in my opinion. I know that natur' is weak—human natur', I mean—and that we should none of us vaunt of our gifts, whether red or white; but I do not think a truer-hearted lad lives on the lines than Jasper Western."

"Bless you! bless you for that, Pathfinder!" burst forth from Mabel's very soul, while a flood of tears gave vent to emotions that were so varied while they were so violent. "Oh, bless you, Pathfinder, bless you! The brave should never desert the brave—the honest should sustain the honest."

The father's eyes were fastened anxiously on the face of his daughter, until the latter hid her countenance in her apron to conceal her tears; and then they turned with inquiry to the hard features of the guide. The latter merely wore their usual expression of frankness, sincerity,



and uprightness; and the Sergeant motioned to him to proceed.

"You know the spot where the Sarpent and I left you, Sergeant," Pathfinder resumed; "and I need say nothing of all that happened afore. It is now too late to regret what is gone and passed; but I do think if I had stayed with the boats this would not have come to pass. Other men may be as good guides—I make no doubt they are; but then natur' bestows its gifts, and some must be better than other some. I daresay poor Gilbert, who took my place, has suffered for his mistake."

"He fell at my elbow," the Sergeant answered in a low melancholy tone. "We have, indeed, all suffered for our mistakes."

"No, no, Sergeant, I meant no condemnation on you; for men were never better commanded than youn, in this very expedition. I never beheld a prettier flanking; and the way in which you carried your own boat up ag'in their howitzer might have teach'd Lundie himself a lesson."

The eyes of the Sergeant brightened, and his face even wore an expression of military triumph, though it was of a degree that suited the humble sphere in which he had been an actor.

"'Twas not badly done, my friend," said he; "and we carried their log breastwork by storm."

The father turned a gratified look upon his child; and Mabel felt a sinking of the heart that at such a moment she could not have thought possible, when she wished to believe all her concern centred in the situation of her parent. As the latter held out his hand, she took it in her own and kissed it. Then, kneeling at his side, she wept as if her heart would break.

"Mabel," said he steadily, "the will of God must be done. It is useless to attempt deceiving either you or myself; my time has come, and it is a consolation to me to die like a soldier. Lundie will do me justice; for our good friend Pathfinder will tell him what has been done, and how all came to pass. You do not forget our last conversation?"

"Nay, father, my time has probably come too," exclaimed Mabel, who felt just then as if it would be a relief to die. "I cannot hope to escape; and Pathfinder would do well to leave us, and return to the garrison with the sad news while he can."

"Mabel Dunham," said Pathfinder reproachfully, though

he took her hand with kindness, "I have not deserved this. I know I am wild, and uncouth, and ungainly——"

"Pathfinder!"

"Well, well, we'll forget it; you did not mean it, you could not think it. It is useless now to talk of escaping, for the Sergeant cannot be moved; and the blockhouse must be defended, cost what it will. Maybe Lundie will get the tidings of our disaster, and send a party to raise the siege."

"Pathfinder—Mabel!" said the Sergeant, who had been writhing with pain until the cold sweat stood on his forehead; "come both to my side. You understand each other, I hope?"

"Father, say nothing of that; it is all as you wish."

"Thank God! Give me your hand, Mabel—here, Pathfinder, take it. I can do no more than give you the girl in this way. I know you will make her a kind husband. Do not wait on account of my death; but there will be a chaplain in the fort before the season closes, and let him marry you at once. My brother, if living, will wish to go back to his vessel, and then the child will have no protector. Mabel, your husband will have been my friend, and that will be some consolation to you, I hope."

"Trust this matter to me, Sergeant," put in Pathfinder; "leave it all in my hands as your dying request; and, depend on it, all will go as it should."

"I do, I do put all confidence in you, my trusty friend, and empower you to act as I could act myself in every particular. Mabel, child,—hand me the water,—you will never repent this night. Bless you, my daughter! God bless, and have you in His holy keeping!"

This tenderness was inexpressibly touching to one of Mabel's feelings; and she felt at that moment as if her future union with Pathfinder had received a solemnization that no ceremony of the Church could render more holy. Still, a weight, as that of a mountain, lay upon her heart, and she thought it would be happiness to die. While thoughts like these were rising in his mind, Mabel, who watched the slightest change in her father's breathing, heard a guarded knock at the door. Supposing it might be Chingachgook, she rose, undid two of the bars, and held the third in her hand, as she asked who was there. The answer was in her uncle's voice, and he implored her to give him instant admission. Without an instant of hesitation, she

turned the bar, and Cap entered. He had barely passed the opening, when Mabel closed the door again, and secured it as before, for practice had rendered her expert in this portion of her duties.

The sturdy seaman, when he had made sure of the state of his brother-in-law, and that Mabel, as well as himself, was safe, was softened nearly to tears. His own appearance he explained by saying that he had been carelessly guarded, under the impression that he and the Quartermaster were sleeping under the fumes of liquor with which they had been plied with a view to keep them quiet in the expected engagement. Muir had been left asleep, or seeming to sleep; but Cap had run into the bushes on the alarm of the attack, and having found Pathfinder's canoe, had only succeeded, at that moment, in getting to the blockhouse, whither he had come with the kind intent of escaping with his niece by water. It is scarcely necessary to say that he changed his plan when he ascertained the state of the Sergeant, and the apparent security of his present quarters.

"If the worst comes to the worst, Master Pathfinder," said he, "we must strike, and that will entitle us to receive quarter. We owe it to our manhood to hold out a reasonable time, and to ourselves to haul down the ensign in season to make saving conditions. I wished Master Muir to do the same thing when we were captured by these chaps you call vagabonds—and rightly are they named, for viler vagabonds do not walk the earth——"

"You've found out their characters?" interrupted Pathfinder, who was always as ready to chime in with abuse of the Mingos as with the praises of his friends. "Now, had you fallen into the hands of the Delawares, you would have learned the difference."

"Well, to me they seem much of a muchness; blackguards fore and aft, always excepting our friend the Serpent, who is a gentleman for an Indian. But, when these savages made the assault on us, killing Corporal M'Nab and his men as if they had been so many rabbits, Lieutenant Muir and myself took refuge in one of the holes of this here island, of which there are so many among the rocks, and there we remained stowed away like two leaguers in a ship's hold, until we gave out for want of grub. A man may say that grub is the foundation of human nature. I desired the Quartermaster to make terms, for we could have defended ourselves for an hour or two in the place,

bad as it was; but he declined, on the ground that the knaves wouldn't keep faith if any of them were hurt, and so there was no use in asking them to. I consented to strike, on two principles; one, that we might be said to have struck already, for running below is generally thought to be giving up the ship; and the other, that we had an enemy in our stomachs that was more formidable in his attacks than the enemy on deck."

"Uncle," said Mabel in a mournful voice and with an expostulatory manner, "my poor father is sadly, sadly hurt!"

"True, Magnet, true; I will sit by him, and do my best at consolation. Are the bars well fastened, girl? for on such an occasion the mind should be tranquil and undisturbed."

"We are safe, I believe, from all but this heavy blow of Providence."

"Well, then, Magnet, do you go up to the floor above and try to compose yourself, while Pathfinder runs aloft and takes a look-out from the cross-trees. Your father may wish to say something to me in private, and it may be well to leave us alone. These are solemn scenes, and inexperienced people, like myself, do not always wish what they say to be overheard."

Although the idea of her uncle's affording religious consolation by the side of a death-bed certainly never obtruded itself on the imagination of Mabel, she thought there might be a propriety in the request with which she was unacquainted, and she complied accordingly. Pathfinder had already ascended to the roof to make his survey, and the brothers-in-law were left alone.

"Ah, brother Cap, had Pathfinder been with us in the boats, this sad affair might not have happened!"

"That is quite likely; for his worst enemy will allow that the man is a good guide; but then, Sergeant, if the truth must be spoken, you have managed this expedition in a loose way altogether. You should have hove-to off your haven, and sent in a boat to reconnoitre, as I told you before. That is a matter to be repented of? and I tell it to you, because truth, in such a case, ought to be spoken."

"My errors are dearly paid for, brother; and poor Mabel, I fear, will be the sufferer. I think, however, that the calamity would not have happened had there not been treason.



I fear me, brother, that Jasper Eau-douce has played us false."

"That is just my notion; for this fresh-water life must sooner or later undermine any man's morals. Lieutenant Muir and myself talked this matter over while we lay in a bit of a hole out there, on this island; and we both came to the conclusion that nothing short of Jasper's treachery could have brought us all into this infernal scrape. Well, Sergeant, you had better compose your mind, and think of other matters; for, when a vessel is about to enter a strange port, it is more prudent to think of the anchorage inside than to be under-running all the events that have turned up during the v'y'ge. There's the log-book expressly to note all these matters in; and what stands there must form the column of figures that's to be posted up for or against us. How now, Pathfinder! is there anything in the wind, that you come down the ladder like an Indian in the wake of a scalp?"

The guide raised a finger for silence, and then beckoned to Cap to ascend the first ladder, and to allow Mabel to take his place at the side of the Sergeant.

"We must be prudent, and we must be bold too," said he in a low voice. "The riptyles are in earnest in their intention to fire the block; for they know there is now nothing to be gained by letting it stand. I hear the voice of that vagabond Arrowhead among them, and he is urging them to set about their devilry this very night. We must be stirring, Saltwater, and doing too. Luckily there are four or five barrels of water in the block, and these are something towards a siege. My reckoning is wrong, too, or we shall yet reap some advantage from that honest fellow's, the Serpent, being at liberty."

Cap did not wait for a second invitation; but, stealing away, he was soon in the upper room with Pathfinder, while Mabel took his post at the side of her father's humble bed. Pathfinder had opened a loop, having so far concealed the light that it would not expose him to a treacherous shot; and, expecting a summons, he stood with his face near the hole, ready to answer. The stillness that succeeded was at length broken by the voice of Muir.

"Master Pathfinder," called out the Scotchman, "a friend summons you to a parley. Come freely to one of the loops; for you've nothing to fear so long as you are in converse with an officer of the 55th."

"What is your will, Quartermaster? what is your will? I know the 55th, and believe it to be a brave regiment; though I rather incline to the 60th as my favorite, and to the Delawares more than to either; but what would you have, Quartermaster? It must be a pressing errand that brings you under the loops of a blockhouse at this hour of the night, with the sartainty of Killdeer being inside of it."

"Oh, you'll no' harm a friend, Pathfinder, I'm certain; and that's my security. You're a man of judgment, and have gained too great a name on this frontier for bravery to feel the necessity of foolhardiness to obtain a character. You'll very well understand, my good friend, there is as much credit to be gained by submitting gracefully, when resistance becomes impossible, as by obstinately holding out contrary to the rules of war. The enemy is too strong for us, my brave comrade, and I come to counsel you to give up the block, on condition of being treated as a prisoner of war."

"I thank you for this advice, Quartermaster, which is the more acceptable as it costs nothing; but I do not think it belongs to my gifts to yield a place like this while food and water last."

"Well, I'd be the last, Pathfinder, to recommend anything against so brave a resolution, did I see the means of maintaining it. But ye'll remember that Master Cap has fallen."

"Not he, not he!" roared the individual in question through another loop; "and so far from that, Lieutenant, he has risen to the height of this here fortification, and has no mind to put his head of hair into the hands of such barbers again, so long as he can help it. I look upon this blockhouse as a circumstance, and have no mind to throw it away."

"If that is a living voice," returned Muir, "I am glad to hear it; for we all thought the man had fallen in the late fearful confusion. But, Master Pathfinder, although ye're enjoying the society of our friend Cap,—and a great pleasure do I know it to be, by the experience of two days and a night passed in a hole in the earth,—we've lost that of Sergeant Dunham, who has fallen, with all the brave men he led in the late expedition. Lundie would have it so, though it would have been more discreet and becoming to send a commissioned officer in command. Dunham was a brave man, notwithstanding, and shall have justice done his memory. In short, we have all acted for the best, and

that is as much as could be said in favor of Prince Eugene, the Duke of Marlborough, or the great Earl of Stair himself."

"You're wrong ag'in, Quartermaster, you're wrong ag'in," answered Pathfinder, resorting to a ruse to magnify his force. "The Sergeant is safe in the block too, where one might say the whole family is collected."

"Well, I rejoice to hear it, for we had certainly counted the Sergeant among the slain. If pretty Mabel is in the block still, let her not delay an instant, for heaven's sake, in quitting it, for the enemy is about to put it to the trial by fire. Ye know the potency of that dread element, and will be acting more like the discreet and experienced warrior ye're universally allowed to be, in yielding a place you canna' defend, than in drawing down ruin on yourself and companions."

"I know the potency of fire, as you call it, Quartermaster; and am not to be told, at this late hour, that it can be used for something else besides cooking a dinner. But I make no doubt you've heard of the potency of Killdeer, and the man who attempts to lay a pile of brush against these logs will get a taste of his power. As for arrows, it is not in their gift to set this building on fire, for we've no shingles on our roof, but good solid logs and green bark, and plenty of water besides. The roof is so flat, too, as you know yourself, Quartermaster, that we can walk on it, and so no danger on that score while water lasts. I'm peaceable enough if let alone; but he who endeavors to burn this block over my head will find the fire squinched in his own blood."

"This is idle and romantic talk, Pathfinder, and ye'll no' maintain it yourself when ye come to meditate on the realities. I hope ye'll no' gainsay the loyalty or the courage of the 55th, and I feel convinced that a council of war would decide on the propriety of a surrender forthwith. Na, na, Pathfinder, foolhardiness is na mair like the bravery o' Wallace or Bruce than Albany on the Hudson is like the old town of Edinbro'."

"As each of us seems to have made up his mind, Quartermaster, more words are useless. If the riptyles near you are disposed to set about their hellish job, let them begin at once. They can burn wood, and I'll burn powder. If I were an Indian at the stake, I suppose I could brag as well as the rest of them; but, my gifts and natur'

being both white, my turn is rather for doing than talking. You've said quite enough, considering you carry the king's commission; and should we all be consumed, none of us will bear *you* any malice."

"Pathfinder, ye'll no' be exposing Mabel, pretty Mabel Dunham, to sic' a calamity!"

"Mabel Dunham is by the side of her wounded father, and God will care for the safety of a pious child. Not a hair of her head shall fall, while my arm and sight remain true; and though *you* may trust the Mingos, Master Muir, I put no faith in them. You've a knavish Tuscarora in your company there, who has art and malice enough to spoil the character of any tribe with which he consorts, though he found the Mingos ready ruined to his hands, I fear. But enough said; now let each party go to the use of his means and his gifts."

Throughout this dialogue Pathfinder had kept his body covered, lest a treacherous shot should be aimed at the loop; and he now directed Cap to ascend to the roof in order to be in readiness to meet the first assault. Although the latter used sufficient diligence, he found no less than ten blazing arrows sticking to the bark, while the air was filled with the yells and whoops of the enemy. A rapid discharge of rifles followed, and the bullets came pattering against the logs, in a way to show that the struggle had indeed seriously commenced.

These were sounds, however, that appalled neither Pathfinder nor Cap, while Mabel was too much absorbed in her affliction to feel alarm. She had good sense enough, too, to understand the nature of the defences, and fully to appreciate their importance. As for her father, the familiar noises revived him; and it pained his child, at such a moment, to see that his glassy eye began to kindle, and that the blood returned to a cheek it had deserted, as he listened to the uproar. It was now Mabel first perceived that his reason began slightly to wander.

"Order up the light companies," he muttered, "and let the grenadiers charge! Do they dare to attack us in our fort? Why does not the artillery open on them?"

At that instant the heavy report of a gun burst on the night; and the crashing of rending wood was heard, as a heavy shot tore the logs in the room above, and the whole block shook with the force of a shell that lodged in the work. The Pathfinder narrowly escaped the passage of



this formidable missile as it entered; but when it exploded, Mabel could not suppress a shriek, for she supposed all over her head, whether animate or inanimate, destroyed. To increase her horror, her father shouted in a frantic voice to "charge!"

"Mabel," said Pathfinder, with his head at the trap, "this is true Mingo work—more noise than injury. The vagabonds have got the howitzer we took from the French, and have discharged it ag'in the block; but fortunately they have fired off the only shell we had, and there is an end of its use for the present. There is some confusion among the stores up in this loft, but no one is hurt. Your uncle is still on the roof; and, as for myself, I've run the gauntlet of too many rifles to be skeary about such a thing as a howitzer, and that in Indian hands."

Mabel murmured her thanks, and tried to give all her attention to her father, whose efforts to rise were only counteracted by his debility. During the fearful minutes that succeeded, she was so much occupied with the care of the invalid that she scarcely heeded the clamor that reigned around her. Indeed, the uproar was so great, that, had not her thoughts been otherwise employed, confusion of faculties rather than alarm would probably have been the consequence.

Cap preserved his coolness admirably. He had a profound and increasing respect for the power of the savages, and even for the majesty of fresh water, it is true; but his apprehensions of the former proceeded more from his dread of being scalped and tortured than from any unmanly fear of death; and, as he was now on the deck of a house, if not on the deck of a ship, and knew that there was little danger of boarders, he moved about with a fearlessness and a rash exposure of his person that Pathfinder, had he been aware of the fact, would have been the first to condemn. Instead of keeping his body covered, agreeably to the usages of Indian warfare, he was seen on every part of the roof, dashing the water right and left, with the apparent steadiness and unconcern he would have manifested had he been a sail trimmer exercising his art in a battle afloat. His appearance was one of the causes of the extraordinary clamor among the assailants; who, unused to see their enemies so reckless, opened upon him with their tongues, like a pack that has the fox in view. Still he appeared to possess a charmed life; for, though the bullets whistled around him on every side, and his clothes were several times torn, nothing cut his

skin. When the shell passed through the logs below, the old sailor dropped his bucket, waved his hat, and gave three cheers; in which heroic act he was employed as the dangerous missile exploded. This characteristic feat probably saved his life; for from that instant the Indians ceased to fire at him, and even to shoot their flaming arrows at the block, having taken up the notion simultaneously, and by common consent, that the "Saltwater" was mad; and it was a singular effect of their magnanimity never to lift a hand against those whom they imagined devoid of reason.

The conduct of Pathfinder was very different. Everything he did was regulated by the most exact calculation, the result of long experience and habitual thoughtfulness. His person was kept carefully out of a line with the loops, and the spot that he selected for his look-out was one quite removed from danger. This celebrated guide had often been known to lead forlorn hopes: he had once stood at the stake, suffering under the cruelties and taunts of savage ingenuity and savage ferocity without quailing; and legends of his exploits, coolness, and daring were to be heard all along that extensive frontier, or wherever men dwelt and men contended. But on this occasion, one who did not know his history and character might have thought his exceeding care and studied attention to self-preservation proceeded from an unworthy motive. But such a judge would not have understood his subject; the Pathfinder bethought himself of Mabel, and of what might possibly be the consequences to that poor girl should any casualty befall himself. But the recollection rather quickened his intellect than changed his customary prudence. He was, in fact, one of those who was so unaccustomed to fear, that he never bethought him of the constructions others might put upon his conduct. But while in moments of danger he acted with the wisdom of the serpent, it was also with the simplicity of a child.

For the first ten minutes of the assault, Pathfinder never raised the breech of his rifle from the floor, except when he changed his own position, for he well knew that the bullets of the enemy were thrown away upon the massive logs of the work; and, as he had been at the capture of the howitzer, he felt certain that the savages had no other shell than the one found in it when the piece was taken. There existed no reason, therefore, to dread the fire of the assailants, except as a casual bullet might find a passage

through a loophole. One or two of these accidents did occur, but the balls entered at an angle that deprived them of all chance of doing any injury so long as the Indians kept near the block; and if discharged from a distance, there was scarcely the possibility of one in a hundred's striking the apertures. But when Pathfinder heard the sound of moccasined feet and the rustling of brush at the foot of the building, he knew that the attempt to build a fire against the logs was about to be renewed. He now summoned Cap from the roof, where, indeed, all the danger had ceased, and directed him to stand in readiness with his water at a hole immediately over the spot assailed.

One less trained than our hero would have been in a hurry to repel this dangerous attempt also, and might have resorted to his means prematurely; not so with Pathfinder. His aim was not only to extinguish the fire, about which he felt little apprehension, but to give the enemy a lesson that would render him wary during the remainder of the night. In order to effect the latter purpose, it became necessary to wait until the light of the intended conflagration should direct his aim, when he well knew that a very slight effort of his skill would suffice. The Iroquois were permitted to collect their heap of dried brush, to pile it against the block, to light it, and to return to their covers without molestation. All that Pathfinder would suffer Cap to do, was to roll a barrel filled with water to the hole immediately over the spot, in readiness to be used at the proper instant. That moment, however, did not arrive, in his judgment, until the blaze illuminated the surrounding bushes, and there had been time for his quick and practised eye to detect the forms of three or four lurking savages, who were watching the progress of the flames, with the cool indifference of men accustomed to look on human misery with apathy. Then, indeed, he spoke.

"Are you ready, friend Cap?" he asked. "The heat begins to strike through the crevices; and although these green logs are not of the fiery natur' of an ill-tempered man, they may be kindled into a blaze if one provokes them too much. Are you ready with the barrel? See that it has the right cut, and that none of the water is wasted."

"All ready!" answered Cap, in the manner in which a seaman replies to such a demand.

"Then wait for the word. Never be over-impatient in a critical time, nor fool-risky in a battle. Wait for the word."

While the Pathfinder was giving these directions, he was also making his own preparations; for he saw it was time to act. Killdeer was deliberately raised, pointed, and discharged. The whole process occupied about half a minute, and as the rifle was drawn in the eye of the marksman was applied to the hole.

"There is one riptyle the less," Pathfinder muttered to himself; "I've seen that vagabond afore, and know him to be a marciess devil. Well, well! the man acted according to his gifts, and he has been rewarded according to his gifts. One more of the knaves, and that will sarve the turn for to-night. When daylight appears, we may have hotter work."

All this time another rifle was being got ready; and as Pathfinder ceased, a second savage fell. This indeed sufficed; for, indisposed to wait for a third visitation from the same hand, the whole band, which had been crouching in the bushes around the block, ignorant of who was and who was not exposed to view, leaped from their covers and fled to different places for safety.

"Now, pour away, Master Cap," said Pathfinder; "I've made my mark on the blackguards; and we shall have no more fires lighted to-night."

"Scaldings!" cried Cap, upsetting the barrel, with a care that at once and completely extinguished the flames.

This ended the singular conflict; and the remainder of the night passed in peace. Pathfinder and Cap watched alternately, though neither can be said to have slept. Sleep indeed scarcely seemed necessary to them, for both were accustomed to protracted watchings; and there were seasons and times when the former appeared to be literally insensible to the demands of hunger and thirst and callous to the effects of fatigue.

Mabel watched by her father's pallet, and began to feel how much our happiness in this world depends even on things that are imaginary. Hitherto she had virtually lived without a father, the connection with her remaining parent being ideal rather than positive; but now that she was about to lose him, she thought for the moment that the world would be a void after his death, and that she could never be acquainted with happiness again.



## CHAPTER XIX

As the light returned, Pathfinder and Cap ascended again to the roof, with a view to reconnoitre the state of things once more on the island. This part of the blockhouse had a low battlement around it, which afforded a considerable protection to those who stood in its centre; the intention having been to enable marksmen to lie behind it and to fire over its top. By making proper use, therefore, of these slight defences,—slight as to height, though abundantly ample as far as they went,—the two look-outs commanded a pretty good view of the island, its covers excepted, and of most of the channels that led to the spot.

The gale was still blowing very fresh at south; and there were places in the river where its surface looked green and angry, though the wind had hardly sweep enough to raise the water into foam. The shape of the little island was nearly oval, and its greater length was from east to west. By keeping in the channels that washed it, in consequence of their several courses and of the direction of the gale, it would have been possible for a vessel to range past the island on either of its principal sides, and always to keep the wind very nearly abeam. These were the facts first noticed by Cap, and explained to his companion; for the hopes of both now rested on the chances of relief sent from Oswego. At this instant, while they stood gazing anxiously about them, Cap cried out, in his lusty, hearty manner:

“Sail, ho!”

Pathfinder turned quickly in the direction of his companion's face; and there, sure enough, was just visible the object of the old sailor's exclamation. The elevation enabled the two to overlook the low land of several of the adjacent islands; and the canvas of a vessel was seen through the bushes that fringed the shore of one that lay to the southward and westward. The stranger was under what seamen call low sail; but so great was the power of the wind, that her white outlines were seen flying past the openings of the verdure with the velocity of a fast-travelling horse—resembling a cloud driving in the heavens.

“That cannot be Jasper,” said Pathfinder in disappointment; for he did not recognize the cutter of his friend in the swift-passing object. “No, no, the lad is behind the

hour; and that is some craft which the Frenchers have sent to aid their friends, the accursed Mingos."

"This time you are out in your reckoning, friend Pathfinder, if you never were before," returned Cap in a manner that had lost none of its dogmatism by the critical circumstances in which they were placed. "Fresh water or salt, that is the head of the *Scud's* mainsail, for it is cut with a smaller gore than common; and then you can see that the gaff has been fished—quite neatly done, I admit, but fished."

"I can see none of this, I confess," answered Pathfinder, to whom even the terms of his companion were Greek.

"No! Well, I own that surprises me, for I thought *your* eyes could see anything! Now to me nothing is plainer than that gore and that fish; and I must say, my honest friend, that in your place I should apprehend that my sight was beginning to fail."

"If Jasper is truly coming, I shall apprehend but little. We can make good the block against the whole Mingo nation for the next eight or ten hours; and with Eau-douce to cover the retreat, I shall despair of nothing. God send that the lad may not run alongside of the bank, and fall into an ambushment, as befell the Sergeant!"

"Ay, there's the danger. There ought to have been signals concerted, and an anchorage-ground buoyed out, and even a quarantine station or a lazaretto would have been useful, could we have made these Minks-ho respect the laws. If the lad fetches up, as you say, anywhere in the neighborhood of this island, we may look upon the cutter as lost. And, after all, Master Pathfinder, ought we not to set down this same Jasper as a secret ally of the French, rather than as a friend of our own? I know the Sergeant views the matter in that light; and I must say this whole affair looks like treason."

"We shall soon know, we shall soon know, Master Cap; for there, indeed, comes the cutter clear of the other island, and five minutes must settle the matter. It would be no more than fair, however, if we could give the boy some sign in the way of warning. It is not right that he should fall into the trap without a notice that it has been laid."

Anxiety and suspense, notwithstanding, prevented either from attempting to make any signal. It was not easy, truly, to see how it could be done; for the *Scud* came foaming through the channel, on the weather side of the

island, at a rate that scarcely admitted of the necessary time. Nor was any one visible on her deck to make signs to; even her helm seemed deserted, though her course was as steady as her progress was rapid.

Cap stood in silent admiration of a spectacle so unusual. But, as the *Scud* drew nearer, his practised eye detected the helm in play by means of tiller-ropes, though the person who steered was concealed. As the cutter had weather-boards of some little height, the mystery was explained, no doubt remaining that her people lay behind the latter, in order to be protected from the rifles of the enemy. As this fact showed that no force beyond that of the small crew could be on board, Pathfinder received his companion's explanation with an ominous shake of the head.

"This proves that the Sarpent has not reached Oswego," said he, "and that we are not to expect succor from the garrison. I hope Lundie has not taken it into his head to displace the lad, for Jasper Western would be a host of himself in such a strait. We three, Master Cap, ought to make a manful warfare: you, as a seaman, to keep up the intercourse with the cutter; Jasper, as a laker who knows all that is necessary to be done on the water; and I, with gifts that are as good as any among the Mingos, let me be what I may in other particulars. I say we ought to make a manful fight in Mabel's behalf."

"That we ought, and that we will," answered Cap heartily; for he began to have more confidence in the security of his scalp now that he saw the sun again. "I set down the arrival of the *Scud* as one circumstance, and the chances of Oh-deuce's honesty as another. This Jasper is a young man of prudence, you find; for he keeps a good offing, and seems determined to know how matters stand on the island before he ventures to bring up."

"I have it! I have it!" exclaimed Pathfinder, with exultation. "There lies the canoe of the Sarpent on the cutter's deck; and the chief has got on board, and no doubt has given a true account of our condition; for, unlike a Mingo, a Delaware is sertain to get a story right, or to hold his tongue."

"That canoe may not belong to the cutter," said the captious seaman. "Oh-deuce had one on board when he sailed."

"Very true, friend Cap; but if you know your sails and masts by your gores and fishes, I know my canoes and my

paths by frontier knowledge. If you can see new cloth in a sail, I can see new bark in a canoe. That is the boat of the *Serpent*, and the noble fellow has struck off for the garrison as soon as he found the block besieged, has fallen in with the *Scud*, and, after telling his story, has brought the cutter down here to see what can be done. The Lord grant that Jasper Western be still on board her!"

"Yes, yes; it might not be amiss; for, traitor or loyal, the lad has a handy way with him in a gale, it must be owned."

"And in coming over waterfalls!" said Pathfinder, nudging the ribs of his companion with an elbow, and laughing in his silent but hearty manner. "We will give the boy his due, though he scalps us all with his own hand."

The *Scud* was now so near, that Cap made no reply.

The progress of the cutter was steady and rapid. She held her way mid-channel, now inclining to the gusts, and now rising again, like the philosopher that bends to the calamities of life to resume his erect attitude as they pass away, but always piling the water beneath her bows in foam. Although she was under so very short canvas, her velocity was great, and there could not have elapsed ten minutes between the time when her sails were first seen glancing past the trees and bushes in the distance and the moment when she was abreast of the blockhouse. Cap and Pathfinder leaned forward, as the cutter came beneath their eyrie, eager to get a better view of her deck, when, to the delight of both, Jasper Eau-douce sprang upon his feet and gave three hearty cheers. Regardless of all risk, Cap leaped upon the rampart of logs and returned the greeting, cheer for cheer. Happily, the policy of the enemy saved the latter; for they still lay quiet, not a rifle being discharged. On the other hand, Pathfinder kept in view the useful, utterly disregarding the mere dramatic part of warfare. The moment he beheld his friend Jasper, he called out to him with stentorian lungs,—

"Stand by us, lad, and the day's our own! Give 'em a grist in yonder bushes, and you'll put 'em up like part-ridges."

Part of this reached Jasper's ears, but most was borne off to leeward on the wings of the wind. By the time this was said, the *Scud* had driven past, and in the next moment she was hid from view by the grove in which the blockhouse was partially concealed.



Two anxious minutes succeeded; but, at the expiration of that brief space, the sails were again gleaming through the trees, Jasper having wore, jibed, and hauled up under the lee of the island on the other tack. The wind was free enough, as has been already explained, to admit of this manœuvre; and the cutter, catching the current under her lee bow, was breasted up to her course in a way that showed she would come out to windward of the island again without any difficulty. This whole evolution was made with the greatest facility, not a sheet being touched, the sails trimming themselves, the rudder alone controlling the admirable machine. The object appeared to be a reconnoissance. When, however, the *Scud* had made the circuit of the entire island, and had again got her weatherly position in the channel by which she had first approached, her helm was put down, and she tacked. The noise of the main-sail flapping when it filled, lose-reefed as it was, sounded like the report of a gun, and Cap trembled lest the seams should open.

"His Majesty gives good canvas, it must be owned," muttered the old seaman; "and it must be owned, too, that boy handles his boat as if he were thoroughly bred! D—me, Master Pathfinder, if I believe, after all that has been reported in the matter, that this Mister Oh-deuce got his trade on this bit of fresh water."

"He did; yes, he did. He never saw the ocean, and has come by his calling altogether up here on Ontario. As for treason and lying and black-hearted vices, friend Cap, Jasper Western is as free as the most virtuous of the Delaware warriors; and if you crave to see a truly honest man, you must go among that tribe to discover him."

"There he comes round!" exclaimed the delighted Cap, the *Scud* at this moment filling on her original tack; "and now we shall see what the boy would be at; he cannot mean to keep running up and down these passages, like a girl footing it through a country-dance."

The *Scud* now kept so much away, that for a moment the two observers on the blockhouse feared Jasper meant to come-to; and the savages, in their lairs, gleamed out upon her with the sort of exultation that the crouching tiger may be supposed to feel as he sees his unconscious victim approach his bed. But Jasper had no such intention: familiar with the shore, and acquainted with the depth of water on every part of the island, he well knew that the

*Scud* might be run against the bank with impunity, and he ventured fearlessly so near, that, as he passed through the little cove, he swept the two boats of the soldiers from their fastenings and forced them out into the channel, towing them with the cutter. As all the canoes were fastened to the two Dunham boats, by this bold and successful attempt the savages were at once deprived of the means of quitting the island, unless by swimming, and they appeared to be instantly aware of the very important fact. Rising in a body they filled the air with yells, and poured in a harmless fire. While up in this unguarded manner, two rifles were discharged by their adversaries. One came from the summit of the block, and an Iroquois fell dead in his tracks, shot through the brain. The other came from the *Scud*. The last was the piece of the Delaware, but, less true than that of his friend, it only maimed an enemy for life. The people of the *Scud* shouted, and the savages sank again, to a man, as if it might be into the earth.

"That was the Serpent's voice," said Pathfinder, as soon as the second piece was discharged. "I know the crack of his rifle as well as I do that of Killdeer. 'Tis a good barrel, though not sartain death. Well, well, with Chingachgook and Jasper on the water, and you and I in the block, friend Cap, it will be hard if we don't teach these Mingo scamps the rationality of a fight."

All this time the *Scud* was in motion. As soon as she had reached the end of the island, Jasper sent his prizes adrift; and they went down before the wind until they stranded on a point half a mile to leeward. He then wore, and came stemming the current again, through the other passage. Those on the summit of the block could now perceive that something was in agitation on the deck of the *Scud*; and, to their great delight, just as the cutter came abreast of the principal cove, on the spot where most of the enemy lay, the howitzer which composed her sole armament was unmasked, and a shower of case-shot was sent hissing into the bushes. A bevy of quail would not have risen quicker than this unexpected discharge of iron hail put up the Iroquois; when a second savage fell by a messenger sent from Killdeer, and another went limping away by a visit from the rifle of Chingachgook. New covers were immediately found, however; and each party seemed to prepare for the renewal of the strife in another form. But the appearance of June, bearing a white flag,

and accompanied by the French officer and Muir, stayed the hands of all, and was the forerunner of another parley.

The negotiation that followed was held beneath the blockhouse; and so near it as at once to put those who were uncovered completely at the mercy of Pathfinder's unerring aim. Jasper anchored directly abeam; and the howitzer, too, was kept trained upon the negotiators: so that the besieged and their friends, with the exception of the man who held the match, had no hesitation about exposing their persons. Chingachgook alone lay in ambush; more, however, from habit than distrust.

"You've triumphed, Pathfinder," called out the Quartermaster, "and Captain Sanglier has come himself to offer terms. You'll no' be denying a brave enemy honorable retreat, when he has fought ye fairly, and done all the credit he could to king and country. Ye are too loyal a subject yourself to visit loyalty and fidelity with a heavy judgment. I am authorized to offer, on the part of the enemy, an evacuation of the island, a mutual exchange of prisoners, and a restoration of scalps. In the absence of baggage and artillery, little more can be done."

As the conversation was necessarily carried on in a high key, both on account of the wind and of the distance, all that was said was heard equally by those in the block and those in the cutter.

"What do you say to that, Jasper?" called out Pathfinder. "You hear the proposal. Shall we let the vagabonds go? or shall we mark them, as they mark their sheep in the settlements, that we may know them again?"

"What has befallen Mabel Dunham?" demanded the young man, with a frown on his handsome face, that was visible even to those on the block. "If a hair of her head has been touched, it will go hard with the whole Iroquois tribe."

"Nay, nay, she is safe below, nursing a dying parent, as becomes her sex. We owe no grudge on account of the Sergeant's hurt, which comes of lawful warfare; and as for Mabel——"

"She is here!" exclaimed the girl herself, who had mounted to the roof the moment she found the direction things were taking,—“she is here! and, in the name of our holy religion, and of that God whom we profess to worship in common, let there be no more bloodshed! Enough has been spilt already; and if these men will go away, Pathfinder—if they will depart peaceably, Jasper—oh, do

not detain one of them! My poor father is approaching his end, and it were better that he should draw his last breath in peace with the world. Go, go, Frenchmen and Indians! we are no longer your enemies, and will harm none of you."

"Tut, tut, Magnet!" put in Cap; "this sounds religious, perhaps, or like a book of poetry; but it does not sound like common sense. The enemy is just ready to strike; Jasper is anchored with his broadside to bear, and, no doubt, with springs on his cables; Pathfinder's eye and hand are as true as the needle; and we shall get prize-money, head-money, and honor in the bargain, if you will not interfere for the next half-hour.

"Well," said Pathfinder, "I incline to Mabel's way of thinking. There *has* been enough blood shed to answer our purpose and to sarve the king; and as for honor, in that meaning, it will do better for young ensigns and recruits than for cool-headed, obsarvant Christian men. There is honor in doing what's right, and unhonor in doing what's wrong; and I think it wrong to take the life even of a Mingo, without a useful end in view, I do; and right to hear reason at all times. So, Lieutenant Muir, let us know what your friends the Frenchers and Indians have to say for themselves."

"My friends!" said Muir, starting; "you'll no' be calling the king's enemies my friends, Pathfinder, because the fortune of war has thrown me into their hands? Some of the greatest warriors, both of ancient and modern times, have been prisoners of war; and yon is Master Cap, who can testify whether we did not do all that men could devise to escape the calamity."

"Ay, ay," drily answered Cap; "escape is the proper word. We ran below and hid ourselves, and so discreetly, that we might have remained in the hole to this hour, had it not been for the necessity of re-stowing the bread lockers. You burrowed on that occasion, Quartermaster, as handily as a fox; and how the d—l you knew so well where to find the spot is a matter of wonder to me. A regular skulk on board ship does not trail aft more readily when the jib is to be stowed, than you went into that same hole."

"And did ye no' follow? There are moments in a man's life when reason ascends to instinct——"

"And men descend into holes," interrupted Cap, laughing in his boisterous way, while Pathfinder chimed in, in his peculiar manner. Even Jasper, though still filled with



concern for Mabel, was obliged to smile. "They say the d—l wouldn't make a sailor if he didn't look aloft; and now it seems he'll not make a soldier if he doesn't look below!"

This burst of merriment, though it was anything but agreeable to Muir, contributed largely towards keeping the peace. Cap fancied he had said a thing much better than common; and that disposed him to yield his own opinion on the main point, so long as he got the good opinion of his companions on his novel claim to be a wit. After a short discussion, all the savages on the island were collected in a body, without arms, at the distance of a hundred yards from the block, and under the gun of the *Scud*; while Pathfinder descended to the door of the blockhouse and settled the terms on which the island was to be finally evacuated by the enemy. Considering all the circumstances, the conditions were not very discreditable to either party. The Indians were compelled to give up all their arms, even to their knives and tomahawks, as a measure of precaution, their force being still quadruple that of their foes. The French officer, Monsieur Sanglier, as he was usually styled, and chose to call himself, remonstrated against this act as one likely to reflect more discredit on his command than any other part of the affair; but Pathfinder, who had witnessed one or two Indian massacres, and knew how valueless pledges became when put in opposition to interest where a savage was concerned, was obdurate. The second stipulation was of nearly the same importance. It compelled Captain Sanglier to give up all his prisoners, who had been kept well guarded in the very hole or cave in which Cap and Muir had taken refuge. When these men were produced, four of them were found to be unhurt; they had fallen merely to save their lives, a common artifice in that species of warfare; and of the remainder, two were so slightly injured as not to be unfit for service. As they brought their muskets with them, this addition to his force immediately put Pathfinder at his ease; for, having collected all the arms of the enemy in the blockhouse, he directed these men to take possession of the building, stationing a regular sentinel at the door. The remainder of the soldiers were dead, the badly wounded having been instantly despatched in order to obtain the much-coveted scalps.

As soon as Jasper was made acquainted with the terms, and the preliminaries had been so far observed as to ren-

der it safe for him to be absent, he got the *Scud* under weigh; and, running down to the point where the boats had stranded, he took them in tow again, and, making a few stretches, brought them into the leeward passage. Here all the savages instantly embarked, when Jasper took the boats in tow a third time, and, running off before the wind, he soon set them adrift full a mile to leeward of the island. The Indians were furnished with but a single oar in each boat to steer with, the young sailor well knowing that by keeping before the wind they would land on the shores of Canada in the course of the morning.

Captain Sanglier, Arrowhead, and June alone remained, when this disposition had been made of the rest of the party: the former having certain papers to draw up and sign with Lieutenant Muir, who in his eyes possessed the virtues which are attached to a commission; and the latter preferring, for reasons of his own, not to depart in company with his late friends, the Iroquois. Canoes were detained for the departure of these three, when the proper moment should arrive.

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## CHAPTER XX

MEN accustomed to such warfare are not apt to be much under the influence of the tender feelings while still in the field. Notwithstanding their habits, however, more than one heart was with Mabel in the block, while the incidents we are about to relate were in the course of occurrence; and even the indispensable meal was less relished by the hardiest of the soldiers than it might have been had not the Sergeant been so near his end.

As Pathfinder returned from the block, he was met by Muir, who led him aside in order to hold a private discourse. The manner of the Quartermaster had that air of supererogatory courtesy about it which almost invariably denotes artifice; for, while physiognomy and phrenology are but lame sciences at the best, and perhaps lead to as many false as right conclusions, we hold that there is no more infallible evidence of insincerity of purpose, short of overt acts, than a face that smiles when there is no occasion, and the tongue that is out of measure smooth. Muir had much of this manner in common, mingled with an apparent frankness

that his Scottish intonation of voice, Scottish accent, and Scottish modes of expression were singularly adapted to sustain. He owed his preferment, indeed, to a long-exercised deference to Lundie and his family; for, while the Major himself was much too acute to be the dupe of one so much his inferior in real talents and attainments, most persons are accustomed to make liberal concessions to the flatterer, even while they distrust his truth and are perfectly aware of his motives. On the present occasion, the contest in skill was between two men as completely the opposites of each other in all the leading essentials of character as very well could be. Pathfinder was as simple as the Quartermaster was practised; he was as sincere as the other was false, and as direct as the last was tortuous. Both were cool and calculating, and both were brave, though in different modes and degrees; Muir never exposing his person except for effect, while the guide included fear among the rational passions, or as a sensation to be deferred to only when good might come of it.

"My dearest friend," Muir commenced,—“for ye’ll be dearer to us all, by seventy and sevenfold, after your late conduct than ever ye were,—ye’ve just established yourself in this late transaction. It’s true that they’ll not be making ye a commissioned officer, for that species of prefairment is not much in your line, nor much in your wishes, I’m thinking; but as a guide, and a counsellor, and a loyal subject, and an expert marksman, yer renown may be said to be full. I doubt if the commander-in-chief will carry away with him from America as much credit as will fall to yer share, and ye ought just to set down in content and enjoy yoursal’ for the remainder of yer days. Get married, man, without delay, and look to your precious happiness; for ye’ve no occasion to look any longer to your glory. Take Mabel Dunham, for Heaven’s sake, to your bosom, and ye’ll have both a bonnie bride and a bonnie reputation.”

“Why, Quartermaster, this is a new piece of advice to come from your mouth. They’ve told me I had a rival in you.”

“And ye had, man; and a formidable one, too, I can tell you,—one that has never yet courted in vain, and yet one that has courted five times. Lundie twits me with four, and I deny the charge; but he little thinks the truth would outdo even his arithmetic. Yes, yes, ye had a rival, Path-

finder; but ye've one no longer in me. Ye've my hearty wishes for yer success with Mabel; and were the honest Sergeant likely to survive, ye might rely on my good word with him, too, for a certainty."

"I feel your friendship, Quartermaster, I feel your friendship, though I have no great need of any favor with Sergeant Dunham, who has long been my friend. I believe we may look upon the matter to be as sartain as most things in war-time; for, Mabel and her father consenting, the whole 55th couldn't very well put a stop to it. Ah's me! the poor, father will scarcely live to see what his heart has so long been set upon."

"But he'll have the consolation of knowing it will come to pass, in dying. Oh, it's a great relief, Pathfinder, for the parting spirit to feel certain that the beloved ones left behind will be well provided for after its departure. All the Mistress Muirs have duly expressed that sentiment with their dying breaths."

"All your wives, Quartermaster, have been likely to feel this consolation."

"Out upon ye, man! I'd no' thought ye such a wag. Well, well; pleasant words make no heart-burnings between auld fri'nds. If I cannot espouse Mabel, ye'll no object to my esteeming her, and speaking well of her, and of yoursal', too, on all suitable occasions and in all companies. But, Pathfinder, ye'll easily understan' that a poor deevil who loses such a bride will probably stand in need of some consolation?"

"Quite likely, quite likely, Quartermaster," returned the simple-minded guide; "I know the loss of Mabel would be found heavy to be borne by myself. It may bear hard on your feelings to see us married; but the death of the Sergeant will be likely to put it off, and you'll have time to think more manfully of it, you will."

"I'll bear up against it; yes, I'll bear up against it, though my heart-strings crack! and ye might help me, man, by giving me something to do. Ye'll understand that this expedition has been of a very peculiar nature; for here am I, bearing the king's commission, just a volunteer, as it might be; while a mere orderly has had the command. I've submitted for various reasons, though my blood has boiled to be in authority, while ye war' battling for the honor of the country and his Majesty's rights——"

"Quartermaster," interrupted the guide, "you fell so early



into the enemy's hands that your conscience ought to be easily satisfied on that score; so take my advice, and say nothing about it."

"That's just my opinion, Pathfinder; we'll all say nothing about it. Sergeant Dunham is *hors de combat*——"

"Anan?" said the guide.

"Why, the Sergeant can command no longer, and it will hardly do to leave a corporal at the head of a victorious party like this; for flowers that will bloom in a garden will die on a heath; and I was just thinking I would claim the authority that belongs to one who holds a lieutenant's commission. As for the men, they'll no dare to raise any objection; and as for yoursal', my dear friend, now that ye've so much honor, and Mabel, and the consciousness of having done yer duty, which is more precious than all, I expect to find an ally rather than one to oppose the plan."

"As for commanding the soldiers of the 55th, Lieutenant, it is your right, I suppose, and no one here will be likely to gainsay it; though you've been a prisoner of war, and there are men who might stand out ag'in giving up their authority to a prisoner released by their own deeds. Still no one here will be likely to say anything hostile to your wishes."

"That's just it, Pathfinder; and when I come to draw up the report of our success against the boats, and the defence of the block, together with the general operations, including the capitulation, ye'll no' find any omission of your claims and merits."

"Tut for my claims and merits, Quartermaster! Lundie knows what I am in the forest and what I am in the fort; and the General knows better than he. No fear of me; tell your own story, only taking care to do justice by Mabel's father, who, in one sense, is the commanding office at this very moment."

Muir expressed his entire satisfaction with this arrangement, as well as his determination to do justice by all, when the two went to the group assembled round the fire. Here the Quartermaster began, for the first time since leaving Oswego, to assume some of the authority that might properly be supposed to belong to his rank. Taking the remaining corporal aside, he distinctly told that functionary that he must in future be regarded as one holding the king's commission, and directed him to acquaint his subordinates with the new state of things. This change in

the dynasty was effected without any of the usual symptoms of a revolution; for, as all well understood the Lieutenant's legal claims to command, no one felt disposed to dispute his orders. For reasons best known to themselves, Lundie and the Quartermaster had originally made a different disposition; and now, for reasons of his own, the latter had seen fit to change it. This was reasoning enough for soldiers, though the hurt received by Sergeant Dunham would have sufficiently explained the circumstance had an explanation been required.

All this time Captain Sanglier was looking after his own breakfast with the resignation of a philosopher, the coolness of a veteran, the ingenuity and science of a Frenchman, and the voracity of an ostrich. This person had now been in the colony some thirty years, having left France in some such situation in his own army as Muir filled in the 55th. An iron constitution, perfect obduracy of feeling, a certain address well suited to manage savages, and an indomitable courage, had early pointed him out to the commander-in-chief as a suitable agent to be employed in directing the military operations of his Indian allies.

After the two heroes had gazed at each other, Monsieur Sanglier touched his cap; for the rudeness of a border life had not entirely destroyed the courtesy of manner he had acquired in youth, nor extinguished that appearance of *bonhomie* which seems inbred in a Frenchman.

"Monsieur le Pathfinder," said he, with a very decided accent, though with a friendly smile, "*un militaire honore le courage, et la loyauté*. You speak Iroquois?"

"Ay, I understand the language of the riptyles, and can get along with it if there's occasion," returned the literal and truth-telling guide; "but it's neither a tongue nor a tribe to my taste. Wherever you find the Mingo blood, in my opinion, Master Flinty-heart, you find a knave. Well, I've seen you often, though it was in battle; and I must say it was always in the van. You must know most of our bullets by sight?"

"Nevvair, sair, your own; *une balle* from your honorable hand be sairtaine deat'. You kill my best warrior on some island."

"That may be, that may be; though I daresay, if the truth was known, they would turn out to be great rascals. No offence to you, Master Flinty-heart, but you keep desperate evil company."

"Yes, *sair*," returned the Frenchman, who, bent on saying that which was courteous himself, and comprehending with difficulty, was disposed to think he received a compliment, "you too good. But *un brave* always *comme ça*. What that mean? ha! what that *jeune homme* do?"

The hand and eye of Captain Sanglier directed the look of Pathfinder to the opposite side of the fire, where Jasper, just at that moment, had been rudely seized by two of the soldiers, who were binding his arms under the direction of Muir.

"What does that mean, indeed?" cried the guide, stepping forward and shoving the two subordinates away with a power of muscle that would not be denied. "Who has the heart to do this to Jasper Eau-douce? and who has the boldness to do it before my eyes?"

"It is by my orders, Pathfinder," answered the Quartermaster, "and I command it on my own responsibility. Ye'll no' ta' on yourself to dispute the legality of orders given by one who bears the king's commission to the king's soldiers?"

"I'd dispute the king's words, if they came from the king's own mouth, did he say that Jasper deserves this. Has not the lad just saved all our scalps, taken us from defeat, and given us victory? No, no, Lieutenant; if this is the first use that you make of your authority, I, for one, will not respect it."

"This savors a little of insubordination," answered Muir; "but we can bear much from Pathfinder. It is true this Jasper has *seemed* to serve us in this affair, but we ought not to overlook past transactions. Did not Major Duncan himself denounce him to Sergeant Dunham before we left the post? Have we not seen sufficient with our own eyes to make sure of having been betrayed? and is it not natural, and almost necessary, to believe that this young man has been the traitor? Ah, Pathfinder! ye'll no' be making yourself a great statesman or a great captain if you put too much faith in appearances. Lord bless me! Lord bless me! if I do not believe, could the truth be come at, as you often say yourself, Pathfinder, that hypocrisy is a more common vice than even envy, and that's the bane of human nature."

Captain Sanglier shrugged his shoulders; then he looked earnestly from Jasper towards the Quartermaster, and from the Quartermaster towards Jasper.

"I care not for your envy, or your hypocrisy, or even for

your human natur’,” returned Pathfinder. “Jasper Eau-douce is my friend; Jasper Eau-douce is a brave lad, and an honest lad, and a loyal lad; and no man of the 55th shall lay hands on him, short of Lundie’s own orders, while I’m in the way to prevent it. You may have authority over your soldiers; but you have none over Jasper and me, Master Muir.”

“*Bon!*” ejaculated Sanglier, the sound partaking equally of the energies of the throat and of the nose.

“Will ye no’ hearken to reason, Pathfinder? Ye’ll no’ be forgetting our suspicions and judgments; and here is another circumstance to augment and aggravate them all. Ye can see this little bit of bunting; well, where should it be found but by Mabel Dunham, on the branch of a tree on this very island, just an hour or so before the attack of the enemy; and if ye’ll be at the trouble to look at the fly of the *Scud’s* ensign, ye’ll just say that the cloth has been cut from out it. Circumstantial evidence was never stronger.”

“*Ma foi, c’est un peu fort, ceci,*” growled Sanglier between his teeth.

“Talk to me of no ensigns and signals when I know the heart,” continued the Pathfinder. “Jasper has the gift of honesty; and it is too rare a gift to be trifled with, like a Mingo’s conscience. No, no; off hands, or we shall see which can make the stoutest battle; you and your men of the 55th, or the Sarpent here, and Killdeer, with Jasper and his crew. You overrate your force, Lieutenant Muir, as much as you underrate Eau-douce’s truth.”

“*Très bon!*”

“Well, if I must speak plainly, Pathfinder, I e’en must. Captain Sanglier here and Arrowhead, this brave Tuscarora, have both informed me that this unfortunate boy is the traitor. After such testimony you can no longer oppose my right to correct him, as well as the necessity of the act.”

“*Scélérat,*” muttered the Frenchman.

“Captain Sanglier is a brave soldier, and will not gainsay the conduct of an honest sailor,” put in Jasper. “Is there any traitor here, Captain Flinty-heart?”

“Ay,” added Muir, “let him speak out then, since ye wish it, unhappy youth! that the truth may be known. I only hope that ye may escape the last punishment when a



court will be sitting on your misdeeds. How is it, Captain; do ye, or do ye not, see a traitor among us?"

"*Oui—yes, sair,—bein sûr.*"

"To much lie!" said Arrowhead in a voice of thunder, striking the breast of Muir with the back of his own hand in a sort of ungovernable gesture; "where my warriors?—where Yengeese scalp? Too much lie!"

Muir wanted not for personal courage, nor for a certain sense of personal honor. The violence which had been intended only for a gesture he mistook for a blow; for conscience was suddenly aroused within him, and he stepped back a pace, extending his hand towards a gun. His face was livid with rage, and his countenance expressed the felt intention of his heart. But Arrowhead was too quick for him; with a wild glance of the eye the Tuscarora looked about him; then thrust a hand beneath his own girdle, drew forth a concealed knife, and, in the twinkling of an eye, buried it in the body of the Quartermaster to the handle. As the latter fell at his feet, gazing into his face with the vacant stare of one surprised by death, Sanglier took a pinch of snuff, and said in a calm voice,—

"*Voilà l'affaire finie; mais,*" shrugging his shoulders, "*ce n'est qu'un scélérat de moins.*"

The act was too sudden to be prevented; and when Arrowhead, uttering a yell, bounded into the bushes, the white men were too confounded to follow. Chingachgook, however, was more collected; and the bushes had scarcely closed on the passing body of the Tuscarora than they were again opened by that of the Delaware in full pursuit.

Jasper Western spoke French fluently, and the words and manner of Sanglier struck him.

"Speak, Monsieur," said he in English; "am I the traitor?"

"*Le voilà,*" answered the cool Frenchman, "dat is our *espion*—our *agent*—our friend—*ma foi—c'était un grand scélérat—voici.*"

While speaking, Sanglier bent over the dead body, and thrust his hand into a pocket of the Quartermaster, out of which he drew a purse. Emptying the contents on the ground, several double-louis rolled towards the soldiers, who were not slow in picking them up. Casting the purse from him in contempt, the soldier of fortune turned towards the soup he had been preparing with so much care, and, finding it to his liking, he began to break his

fast with an air of indifference that the most stoical Indian warrior might have envied.

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## CHAPTER XXI

THE reader must imagine some of the occurrences that followed the sudden death of Muir. While his body was in the hands of his soldiers, who laid it decently aside, and covered it with a greatcoat, Chingachgook silently resumed his place at the fire, and both Sanglier and Pathfinder remarked that he carried a fresh and bleeding scalp at his girdle. No one asked any questions; and the former, although perfectly satisfied that Arrowhead had fallen, manifested neither curiosity nor feeling. He continued calmly eating his soup, as if the meal had been tranquil as usual. There was something of pride and of an assumed indifference to fate, imitated from the Indians, in all this; but there was more that really resulted from practice, habitual self-command, and constitutional hardihood. With Pathfinder the case was a little different in feeling, though much the same in appearance. He disliked Muir, whose smooth-tongued courtesy was little in accordance with his own frank and ingenuous nature; but he had been shocked at his unexpected and violent death, though accustomed to similar scenes, and he had been surprised at the exposure of his treachery.

"Captain Flinty-heart," said Pathfinder, "I suppose this consorting with traitors is a part of a soldier's regular business; but, I tell you honestly, it is not to my liking, and I'd rather it should be you than I who had this affair on his conscience. What an awful sinner! To plot, right and left, ag'in country, friends, and the Lord! Jasper, boy, a word with you aside, for a single minute."

Pathfinder now led the young man apart; and, squeezing his hand, with the tears in his own eyes, he continued:

"You know me, Eau-douce, and I know you," said he, "and this news has not changed my opinion of you in any manner. I never believed their tales, though it looked solemn at one minute, I will own; yes, it did look solemn, and it made me feel solemn too. I never suspected you for a minute, for I know your gifts don't lie that-a-way; but, I must own, I didn't suspect the Quartermaster neither."

"And he holding his Majesty's commission, Pathfinder!"

"It isn't so much that, Jasper Western, it isn't so much that. He held a commission from God to act right, and to deal fairly with his fellow-creatures, and he has failed awfully in his duty."

"To think of his pretending love for one like Mabel, too, when he felt none."

"That was bad, sartainly; the fellow must have had Mingo blood in his veins. The man that deals unfairly by a woman can be but a mongrel, lad; for the Lord has made them helpless on purpose that we may gain their love by kindness and sarvices. Here is the Sergeant, poor man, on his dying bed; he has given me his daughter for a wife, and Mabel, dear girl, she has consented to it; and it makes me feel that I have two welfares to look after, two naturs to care for, and two hearts to gladden. Ah's me, Jasper! I sometimes feel that I'm not good enough for that sweet child!"

Eau-douce had nearly gasped for breath when he first heard this intelligence; and, though he succeeded in suppressing any other outward signs of agitation, his cheek was blanched nearly to the paleness of death. Still he found means to answer not only with firmness, but with energy,—

"Say not so, Pathfinder; you are good enough for a queen."

"Ay, ay, boy, according to your idees of my goodness; that is to say, I can kill a deer, or even a Mingo at need, with any man on the lines; or I can follow a forest-path with as true an eye, or read the stars, when others do not understand them. No doubt, no doubt, Mabel will have venison enough, and fish enough, and pigeons enough; but will she have knowledge enough, and will she have idees enough, and pleasant conversation enough, when life comes to drag a little, and each of us begins to pass for our true value?"

"If you pass for your value, Pathfinder, the greatest lady in the land would be happy with you. On that head you have no reason to feel afraid."

"Now, Jasper, I dare to say *you* think so, nay, I *know* you do; for it is nat'ral, and according to friendship, for people to look over-favorably at them they love. Yes, yes; if I had to marry you, boy, I should give myself no consarn about my being well looked upon, for you have always shown a disposition to see me and all I do with friendly

eyes. But a young gal, after all, must wish to marry a man that is nearer to her own age and fancies, than to have one old enough to be her father, and rude enough to frighten her. I wonder, Jasper, that Mabel never took a fancy to you, now, rather than setting her mind on me."

"Take a fancy to me, Pathfinder!" returned the young man, endeavoring to clear his voice without betraying himself; "what is there about me to please such a girl as Mabel Dunham? I have all that you find fault with in yourself, with none of that excellence that makes even the generals respect you."

"Well, well, it's all chance, say what we will about it. Here have I journeyed and guided through the woods female after female, and consorted with them in the garri-sons, and never have I even felt an inclination for any, until I saw Mabel Dunham. It's true the poor Sergeant first set me to thinking about his daughter; but after we got a little acquainted like, I'd no need of being spoken to, to think of her night and day. I'm tough, Jasper; yes, I'm very tough; and I'm risolute enough, as you all know; and yet I do think it would quite break me down, now, to lose Mabel Dunham!"

"We will talk no more of it, Pathfinder," said Jasper, returning his friend's squeeze of the hand, and moving back towards the fire, though slowly, and in the manner of one who cared little where he went; "we will talk no more of it. You are worthy of Mabel, and Mabel is worthy of you—you like Mabel, and Mabel likes you—her father has chosen you for her husband, and no one has a right to interfere. As for the Quartermaster, his feigning love for Mabel is worse even than his treason to the king."

In the inexpressing sad scenes of the next hour, the deepest feelings of all became revealed. Sergeant Dunham died with Mabel and Jasper kneeling together at his side, with the others close around. Pathfinder instinctively saw a sympathy between the two young people that he had sometimes suspected, and deep down in his heart had actually often wished for. The scene remained vividly present before his mind.

The morning of the third day was set for that on which the *Scud* was to sail. Jasper had made all his preparations; the different effects were embarked, and Mabel had taken leave of June, a painful and affectionate parting. In a word, all was ready, and every soul had left the island



but the Indian woman, Pathfinder, Jasper, and our heroine. The former had gone into a thicket to weep, and the three last were approaching the spot where three canoes lay, one of which was the property of June, and the other two were in waiting to carry the others off to the *Scud*. Pathfinder led the way, but, when he drew near the shore, instead of taking the direction to the boats, he motioned to his companions to follow, and proceeded to a fallen tree, which lay on the margin of the glade and out of view of those in the cutter. Seating himself on the trunk, he signed to Mabel to take her place on one side of him and to Jasper to occupy the other.

"Sit down here, Mabel; sit down there," Eau-douce, he commenced, as soon as he had taken his own seat. "I've something that lies heavy on my mind, and now is the time to take it off, if it's ever to be done. Sit down, Mabel, and let me lighten my heart, if not my conscience, while I've the strength to do it."

The pause that succeeded lasted two or three minutes, and both the young people wondered what was to come next; the idea that Pathfinder could have any weight on his conscience seeming equally improbable to each.

"Mabel," our hero at length resumed, "we must talk plainly to each other afore we join your uncle in the cutter, where the Saltwater has slept every night since the last rally, for he says it's the only place in which a man can be sure of keeping the hair on his head, he does. Ah's me! what have I to do with these follies and sayings now? I try to be pleasant, and to feel light-hearted, but the power of man can't make water run up stream. Mabel, you know that the Sergeant, afore he left us, had settled it 'atween us two that we were to become man and wife, and that we were to live together and to love one another as long as the Lord was pleased to keep us both on 'arth; yes, and afterwards too?"

Mabel's cheeks had regained a little of their ancient bloom in the fresh air of the morning; but at this unlooked-for address they blanched again, nearly to the pallid hue which grief had imprinted there. Still, she looked kindly, though seriously, at Pathfinder, and even endeavored to force a smile.

"Very true, my excellent friend," she answered; "this was my poor father's wish, and I feel certain that a whole

life devoted to your welfare and comforts could scarcely repay you for all you have done for us."

"I fear me, Mabel, that man and wife needs be bound together by a stronger tie than such feelings, I do. You have done nothing for me, or nothing of any account, and yet my very heart yearns towards you, it does; and therefore it seems likely that these feelings come from something besides saving scalps and guiding through woods."

Mabel's cheek had begun to glow again; and though she struggled hard to smile, her voice trembled a little as she answered.

"Had we not better postpone this conversation, Pathfinder?" she said; "we are not alone; and nothing is so unpleasant to a listener, they say, as family matters in which he feels no interest."

"It's because we are not alone, Mabel, or rather because Jasper is with us, that I wish to talk of this matter. The Sergeant believed I might make a suitable companion for you, and, though I had misgivings about it,—yes, I had many misgivings,—he finally persuaded me into the idee, and things came round 'atween us, as you know. But, when you promised your father to marry me, Mabel, and gave me your hand so modestly, but so prettily, there was one circumstance, as your uncle called it, that you didn't know; and I've thought it right to tell you what it is, before matters are finally settled. I've often taken a poor deer for my dinner when good venison was not to be found; but it's as nat'ral not to take up with the worst when the best may be had."

"You speak in a way, Pathfinder, that is difficult to be understood. If this conversation is really necessary, I trust you will be more plain."

"Well then, Mabel, I've been thinking it was quite likely, when you gave in to the Sergeant's wishes, that you did not know the natur' of Jasper Western's feelings towards you?"

"Pathfinder!" and Mabel's cheek now paled to the livid hue of death; then it flushed to the tint of crimson; and her whole frame shuddered. Pathfinder, however, was too intent on his own object to notice this agitation; and Eau-douce had hidden his face in his hands in time to shut out its view.

"I've been talking with the lad; and, on comparing his dreams with my dreams, his feelings with my feelings, and

his wishes with my wishes, I fear we think too much alike concerning you for both of us to be very happy."

"Pathfinder, you forget; you should remember that we are betrothed!" said Mabel hastily, and in a voice so low that it required acute attention in the listeners to catch the syllables. Indeed the last word was not quite intelligible to the guide, and he confessed his ignorance by the usual,—  
"Anan?"

"You forget that we are to be married; and such allusions are improper as well as painful."

"Everything is proper that is right, Mabel; and everything is right that leads to justice and fair dealing; though it *is painful* enough, as you say, as I find on trial, I do. Now, Mabel, had you known that Eau-douce thinks of you in this way, maybe you never would have consented to be married to one as old and as uncomely as I am."

"Why this cruel trial, Pathfinder? To what can all this lead? Jasper Western thinks no such thing: he says nothing, he feels nothing."

"Mabel!" burst from out of the young man's lips, in a way to betray the uncontrollable nature of his emotions, though he uttered not another syllable.

Mabel buried her face in both her hands; and the two sat like a pair of guilty beings, suddenly detected in the commission of some crime which involved the happiness of a common patron. At that instant, perhaps, Jasper himself was inclined to deny his passion, through an extreme unwillingness to grieve his friend; while Mabel, on whom this positive announcement of a fact that she had rather unconsciously hoped than believed, came so unexpectedly, felt her mind momentarily bewildered; and she scarcely knew whether to weep or to rejoice. Still she was the first to speak; since Eau-douce could utter naught that would be disingenuous, or that would pain his friend.

"Pathfinder," said she, "you talk wildly. Why mention this at all?"

Well, Mabel, if I talk wildly, I *am* half wild, you know, by natur', I fear, as well as by habit." As he said this, he endeavored to laugh in his usual noiseless way, but the effect produced a strange and discordant sound; and it appeared nearly to choke him. "Yes, I *must* be wild; I'll not attempt to deny it."

"Dearest Pathfinder! my best, almost my only friend! you *cannot*, *do not* think I intended to say that!" inter-

rupted Mabel, almost breathless in her haste to relieve his mortification. "If courage, truth, nobleness of soul and conduct, unyielding principles, and a hundred other excellent qualities can render any man respectable, esteemed, or beloved, your claims are inferior to those of no other human being."

"What tender and bewitching voices they have, Jasper!" resumed the guide, now laughing freely and naturally. "Yes, natur' seems to have made them on purpose to sing in our ears, when the music of the woods is silent. But we must come to a right understanding, we must. I ask you again, Mabel, if you had known that Jasper Western loves you as well as I do, or better perhaps, though that is scarcely possible; that in his dreams he sees your face in the water of the lake; that he talks to you, and of you, in his sleep; fancies that all is beautiful like Mabel Dunham, and all that is good and virtuous; believes he never knowed happiness till he knowed you; could kiss the ground on which you have trod, and forgets all the joys of his calling to think of you and the delight of gazing at your beauty and in listening to your voice, would you then have consented to marry me?"

Mabel could not have answered this question if she would; but, though her face was buried in her hands, the tint of rushing blood was visible between the openings, and the suffusion seemed to impart itself to her very fingers. Still nature asserted her power, for there was a single instant when the astonished, almost terrified girl stole a glance at Jasper, as if distrusting Pathfinder's history of his feelings, read the truth of all he said in that furtive look, and instantly concealed her face again, as if she would hide it from observation for ever.

"Take time to think, Mabel," the guide continued, "for it is a solemn thing to accept one man for a husband while the thoughts and wishes lead to another. Jasper and I have talked this matter over, freely and like old friends, and, though I always knowed that we viewed most things pretty much alike, I couldn't have thought that we regarded any particular object with the very same eyes, as it might be, until we opened our minds to each other about you. Now Jasper owns that the very first time he beheld you, he thought you the sweetest and winningest creature he had ever met; that your voice sounded like murmuring water in his ears; that he fancied his sails were your



garments fluttering in the wind; that your laugh haunted him in his sleep; and that ag'in and ag'in has he started up affrighted, because he has fancied some one wanted to force you out of the *Scud*, where he imagined you had taken up your abode. Nay, the lad has even acknowledged that he often weeps at the thought that you are likely to spend your days with another, and not with him."

"Jasper!"

"It's solemn truth, Mabel, and it's right you should know it. Now stand up, and choose 'tween us. I do believe Eau-douce loves you as well as I do myself; he has tried to persuade me that he loves you better, but that I will not allow, for I do not think it possible; but I will own the boy loves you, heart and soul, and he has a good right to be heard. The Sergeant left me your protector, and not your tyrant. I told him that I would be a father to you as well as a husband, and it seems to me no feeling father would deny his child this small privilege. Stand up, Mabel, therefore, and speak your thoughts as freely as if I were the Sergeant himself, seeking your good, and nothing else."

Mabel dropped her hands, arose, and stood face to face with her two suitors, though the flush that was on her cheeks was feverish, the evidence of excitement rather than of shame.

"What would you have, Pathfinder?" she asked; "have I not already promised my poor father to do all you desire?"

"Then I desire this. Here I stand, a man of the forest and of little larning, though I fear with an ambition beyond my desarts, and I'll do my endivors to do justice to both sides. In the first place, it is allowed that, so far as feelings in your behalf are consarned, we love you just the same; Jasper thinks his feelings *must* be the strongest, but this I cannot say in honesty, for it doesn't seem to me that it *can* be true, else I would frankly and freely confess it, I would. So in this particular, Mabel, we are here before you on equal tarms. As for myself, being the oldest, I'll first say what little can be produced in my faver, as well as ag'in it. As a hunter, I do think there is no man near the lines that can outdo me. If venison, or bear's meat, or even birds and fish, should ever be scarce in our cabin, it would be more likely to be owing to natur' and Providence than to any fault of mine. In short, it does seem

to me that the woman who depended on me would never be likely to want for food. But I'm fearful ignorant! It's true I speak several tongues, such as they be, while I'm very far from being expert at my own. Then, my years are greater than your own, Mabel; and the circumstance that I was so long the Sergeant's comrade can be no great merit in your eyes. I wish, too, I was more comely, I do; but we are all as natur' made us, and the last thing that a man ought to lament, except on very special occasions, is his looks. When all is remembered, age, looks, learning, and habits, Mabel, conscience tells me that I ought to confess that I'm altogether unfit for you if not downright unworthy; and I would give up the hope this minute, I would, if I didn't feel something pulling at my heart-strings which seems hard to undo."

"Pathfinder! noble, generous Pathfinder!" cried our heroine, seizing his hand and kissing it with a species of holy reverence; "you do yourself injustice—you forget my poor father and your promise—you do not know *me*!"

"Now, here's Jasper," continued the guide, without allowing the girl's caresses to win him from his purpose, "with *him* the case is different. In the way of providing, as in that of loving, there's not much to choose 'atween us; for the lad is frugal, industrious, and careful. Then he is quite a scholar, knows the tongue of the Frenchers, reads many books, and some, I know, that you like to read yourself, can understand you at all times, which, perhaps, is more than I can say for myself."

"What of all this?" interrupted Mabel impatiently; "why speak of it now—why speak of it at all?"

"Then the lad has a manner of letting his thoughts be known, that I fear I can never equal. If there's anything on 'arth that would make my tongue bold and persuading, Mabel, I do think it's yourself; and yet in our late conversations Jasper has outdone me, even on this point, in a way to make me ashamed of myself. He has told me how simple you were, and how true-hearted, and kind-hearted; and how you looked down upon vanities, for though you might be the wife of more than one officer, as he thinks, that you cling to feeling, and would rather be true to yourself and natur' than a colonel's lady. He fairly made my blood warm, he did, when he spoke of your having beauty without seeming ever to have looked upon it, and the manner in which you moved about like a young fa'n,

so nat'ral and graceful like, without knowing it; and the truth and justice of your idees, and the warmth and generosity of your heart——"

"Jasper!" interrupted Mabel, giving way to feelings that had gathered an ungovernable force by being so long pent, and falling into the young man's willing arms, weeping like a child, and almost as helpless. "Jasper! Jasper! why have you kept this from me?"

The answer of Eau-douce was not very intelligible, nor was the murmured dialogue that followed remarkable for coherency. But the language of affection is easily understood. The hour that succeeded passed like a very few minutes of ordinary life, so far as computation of time was concerned; and when Mabel recollected herself, and bethought her of the existence of others, her uncle was pacing the cutter's deck in great impatience, and wondering why Jasper should be losing so much of a favorable wind. Her first thought was of him, who was so likely to feel the recent betrayal of her real emotions.

"Oh, Jasper," she exclaimed, like one suddenly self-convicted, "the Pathfinder!"

Eau-douce fairly trembled, not with unmanly apprehension, but with the painful conviction of the pang he had given his friend; and he looked in all directions in the expectation of seeing his person. But Pathfinder had withdrawn, with a tact and a delicacy that might have done credit to the sensibility and breeding of a courtier. For several minutes the two lovers sat, silently waiting his return, uncertain what propriety required of them under circumstances so marked and so peculiar. At length they beheld their friend advancing slowly towards them, with a thoughtful and even pensive air.

"I now understand what you meant, Jasper, by speaking without a tongue and hearing without an ear," he said when close enough to the tree to be heard. "Yes, I understand it now, I do; and a very pleasant sort of discourse it is, when one can hold it with Mabel Dunham. Ah's me! I told the Sergeant I wasn't fit for her; that I was too old, too ignorant, and too wild like; but he *would* have it otherwise."

Jasper and Mabel sat, resembling Milton's picture of our first parents, when the consciousness of sin first laid its leaden weight on their souls. Neither spoke, neither even moved; though both at that moment fancied they

could part with their new-found happiness in order to restore their friend to his peace of mind. Jasper was pale as death, but, in Mabel, maiden modesty had caused the blood to mantle on her cheeks, until their bloom was heightened to a richness that was scarcely equalled in her hours of light-hearted buoyancy and joy. As the feeling which, in her sex, always accompanies the security of love returned, threw its softness and tenderness over her countenance, she was singularly beautiful. Pathfinder gazed at her with an intentness he did not endeavor to conceal, and then he fairly laughed in his own way, and with a sort of wild exultation, as men that are untutored are wont to express their delight. This momentary indulgence, however, was expiated by the pang which followed the sudden consciousness that this glorious young creature was lost to him for ever. It required a full minute for this simple-minded being to recover from the shock of this conviction; and then he recovered his dignity of manner, speaking with gravity, almost with solemnity.

"I have always known, Mabel Dunham, that men have their gifts," said he; "but I'd forgotten that it did not belong to mine to please the young, the beautiful, the l'arned. I hope the mistake has been no very heavy sin; and if it was, I've been heavily punished for it, I have. Nay, Mabel, I know what you'd say, but it's unnecessary; I *feel* it all, and that is as good as if I *heard* it all. I've had a bitter hour, Mabel. I've had a very bitter hour, lad."

"Hour!" echoed Mabel, as the other first used the word; the tell-tale blood, which had begun to ebb towards her heart, rushing again tumultuously to her very temples; "surely not an hour, Pathfinder?"

"Hour!" exclaimed Jasper at the same instant; "no, no, my worthy friend, it is not ten minutes since you left us!"

"Well, it may be so; though to me it has seemed to be a day. I begin to think, however, that the happy count time by minutes, and the miserable count it by months. But we will talk no more of this; it is all over now, and many words about it will make you no happier, while they will only tell me what I've lost; and quite likely how much I deserved to lose her. No, no, Mabel, 'tis useless to interrupt me; I admit it all, and your gainsaying it, though it be so well meant, cannot change my mind. Well, Jas-



per, she is yours; and, though it's hard to think it, I do believe you'll make her happier than I could, for your gifts are better suited to do so, though I would have strived hard to do as much, if I know myself, I would. I ought to have known better than to believe the Sergeant; and I ought to have put faith in what Mabel told me at the head of the lake, for reason and judgment might have shown me its truths; but it is so pleasant to think what we wish, and mankind so easily over-persuade us, when we over-persuade ourselves. But what's the use in talking of it, as I said afore? It's true, Mabel seemed to be consenting, though it all came from a wish to please her father, and from being skeary about the savages——”

“Pathfinder!”

“I understand you, Mabel, and have no hard feelings, I haven't. I sometimes think I should like to live in your neighborhood, that I might look at your happiness; but on the whole, it's better I should quit the 55th altogether, and go back to the 60th, which is my natyve rigiment, as it might be. It would have been better, perhaps, had I never left it, though my sarvices were much wanted in this quarter, and I'd been with some of the 55th years agone; Sergeant Dunham, for instance, when he was in another corps. Still, Jasper, I do not regret that I've known you——”

“And me, Pathfinder!” impetuously interrupted Mabel; “do you regret having known *me*? Could I think so, I should never be at peace with myself.”

“You, Mabel!” returned the guide, taking the hand of our heroine, and looking up into her countenance with guileless simplicity, but earnest affection; “how could I be sorry that a ray of the sun came across the gloom of a cheerless day—that light has broken in upon darkness, though it remained so short a time? Ah's me! It's settled now, and nothing remains but for me to take leave of you, that you may depart; I feel that Master Cap must be impatient, and there is danger of his coming on shore to look for us all.”

“To take leave!” exclaimed Mabel.

“Leave!” echoed Jasper; “you do not mean to quit us, my friend?”

“'Tis best, Mabel, 'tis altogether best, Eau-douce; and it's wisest. I could live and die in your company, if I only followed feeling; but, if I follow reason, I shall quit you

here. You will go back to Oswego, and become man and wife as soon as you arrive,—for all that is determined with Master Cap, who hankers after the sea again, and who knows what is to happen,—while I shall return to the wilderness and my Maker. Come, Mabel,” continued Pathfinder, rising and drawing nearer to our heroine, with grave decorum, “kiss me; Jasper will not grudge me one kiss; then we’ll part.”

“Oh, Pathfinder!” exclaimed Mabel, falling into the arms of the guide, and kissing his cheeks again and again, with a freedom and warmth she had been far from manifesting while held to the bosom of Jasper; “God bless you, dearest Pathfinder! You’ll come to us hereafter. We shall see you again. When old, you will come to our dwelling, and let me be a daughter to you?”

“Yes, that’s it,” returned the guide, almost gasping for breath; “I’ll try to think of it in that way. You’re more befitting to be my daughter than to be my wife, you are. Farewell, Jasper. Now we’ll go to the canoe; it’s time you were on board.”

The manner in which Pathfinder led the way to the shore was solemn and calm. As soon as he reached the canoe, he again took Mabel by the hands, held her at the length of his own arms, and gazed wistfully into her face, until the unbidden tears rolled out of the fountains of feeling and trickled down his rugged cheeks in streams.

“Bless me, Pathfinder,” said Mabel, kneeling reverently at his feet. “Oh, at least bless me before we part!”

That untutored but noble-minded being did as she desired; and, aiding her to enter the canoe, seemed to tear himself away as one snaps a strong and obstinate cord. Before he retired, however, he took Jasper by the arm and led him a little aside, when he spoke as follows:—

“You’re kind of heart and gentle by natur’, Jasper; but we are both rough and wild in comparison with that dear creatur’. Be careful of her, and never show the roughness of man’s natur’ to her soft disposition. You’ll get to understand her in time; and the Lord, who governs the lake and the forest alike, who looks upon virtue with a smile and upon vice with a frown, keep you happy and worthy to be so!”

Pathfinder made a sign for his friend to depart, and he stood leaning on his rifle until the canoe had reached the side of the *Scud*. Mabel wept as if her heart would break;

nor did her eyes once turn from the open spot in the glade, where the form of the Pathfinder was to be seen, until the cutter had passed a point that completely shut out the island. When last in view, the sinewy frame of the extraordinary man was as motionless as if it were a statue set up in that solitary place to commemorate the scenes of which it had so lately been the witness.

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## CHAPTER XXII

PATHFINDER was accustomed to solitude; but, when the *Scud* had actually disappeared, he was almost overcome with a sense of his loneliness. Never before had he been conscious of his isolated condition in the world; for his feelings had gradually been accustoming themselves to the blandishments and wants of social life; particularly as the last were connected with the domestic affections. Now, all had vanished, as it might be, in one moment; and he was left equally without companions and without hope. Even Chingachgook had left him, though it was but temporarily; still his presence was missed at the precise instant which might be termed the most critical in our hero's life.

Pathfinder stood leaning on his rifle, in the attitude described in the last chapter, a long time after the *Scud* had disappeared. The rigidity of his limbs seemed permanent; and none but a man accustomed to put his muscles to the severest proof could have maintained that posture, with its marble-like inflexibility, for so great a length of time. At length he moved away from the spot; the motion of the body being preceded by a sigh that seemed to heave up from the very depths of his bosom.

It was a peculiarity of this extraordinary being that his senses and his limbs, for all practical purposes, were never at fault, let the mind be preoccupied with other interests as much as it might. On the present occasion neither of these great auxiliaries failed him; but, though his thoughts were exclusively occupied with Mabel, her beauty, her preference of Jasper, her tears, and her departure, he moved in a direct line to the spot where June still remained, which was the grave of her husband. June had suffered her hair to fall about her face, had taken a seat on a stone which had been dug from the excavation made by the grave, and was

hanging over the spot which contained the body of Arrowhead, unconscious of the presence of any other. She believed, indeed, that all had left the island but herself, and the tread of the guide's moccasined feet was too noiseless rudely to undeceive her.

Pathfinder stood gazing at the woman for several minutes in mute attention. The contemplation of her grief, the recollection of her irreparable loss, and the view of her desolation produced a healthful influence on his own feelings; his reason telling him how much deeper lay the sources of grief in a young wife, who was suddenly and violently deprived of her husband, than in himself.

"Dew-of-June," he said solemnly, but with an earnestness which denoted the strength of his sympathy, "you are not alone in your sorrow. Turn, and let your eyes look upon a friend."

"June has no longer any friend!" the woman answered. "Arrowhead has gone to the happy hunting-grounds, and there is no one left to care for June. The Tuscaroras would chase her from their wigwams; the Iroquois are hateful in her eyes, and she could not look at them. No! leave June to starve over the grave of her husband."

"This will never do—this will never do. 'Tis ag'in reason and right. You believe in the Manitou, June?"

"He has hid his face from June because he is angry. He has left her alone to die."

"Listen to one who has had a long acquaintance with red natur', though he has a white birth and white gifts. When the Manitou of the pale-face wishes to produce good in a pale-face heart He strikes it with grief; for it is in our sorrows, June, that we look with the truest eyes into ourselves, and with the farthest-sighted eyes too, as respects right. The Great Spirit wishes you well, and He has taken away the chief, lest you should be led astray by his wily tongue, and get to be a Mingo in your disposition, as you were already in your company."

"Arrowhead was a great chief," returned the woman proudly.

"He had his merits, he had; and he had his demerits, too. But, June, you are not desarted, nor will you be soon. Let your grief out—let it out, according to natur', and when the proper time comes I shall have more to say to you."

Pathfinder now went to his own canoe, and he left the



island. In the course of the day June heard the crack of his rifle once or twice; and as the sun was setting he reappeared, bringing her birds ready cooked, and of a delicacy and flavor that might have tempted the appetite of an epicure. This species of intercourse lasted a month, June obstinately refusing to abandon the grave of her husband all that time, though she still accepted the friendly offerings of her protector. Occasionally they met and conversed, Pathfinder sounding the state of the woman's feelings; but the interviews were short, and far from frequent. June slept in one of the huts, and she laid down her head in security, for she was conscious of the protection of a friend, though Pathfinder invariably retired at night to an adjacent island, where he had built himself a hut.

At the end of the month, however, the season was getting to be too far advanced to render her situation pleasant to June. The trees had lost their leaves, and the nights were becoming cold and wintry. It was time to depart.

At this moment Chingachgook reappeared. He had a long and confidential interview on the island with his friend. June witnessed their movements, and she saw that her guardian was distressed. Stealing to his side, she endeavored to soothe his sorrow with a woman's gentleness and a woman's instinct.

"Thank you, June, thank you!" he said; "'tis well meant, though it's useless. But it is time to quit this place. To-morrow we shall depart. You will go with us, for now you've got to feel reason."

June assented in the meek manner of an Indian woman, and she withdrew to pass the remainder of her time near the grave of Arrowhead. Regardless of the hour and the season, the young widow did not pillow her head during the whole of that autumnal night. She sat near the spot that held the remains of her husband, and prayed, in the manner of her people, for his success on the endless path on which he had so lately gone, and for their reunion in the land of the just. Humble and degraded as she would have seemed in the eyes of the sophisticated and unreflecting, the image of God was on her soul, and it vindicated its divine origin by aspirations and feelings that would have surprised those who, feigning more, feel less.

In the morning the three departed, Pathfinder earnest and intelligent in all he did, the Great Serpent silent and imitative, and June meek, resigned, but sorrowful. They

went in two canoes, that of the woman being abandoned: Chingachgook led the way, and Pathfinder followed, the course being up stream. Two days they paddled westward, and as many nights they encamped on islands.

It was noon when Chingachgook entered a little bay where the *Scud* lay at anchor, in a sort of roadstead. A small ancient clearing was on the shore; and near the margin of the lake was a log dwelling, recently and completely, though rudely fitted up. There was an air of frontier comfort and of frontier abundance around the place, though it was necessarily wild and solitary. Jasper stood on the shore; and when Pathfinder landed, he was the first to take him by the hand. The meeting was simple, but very cordial. No questions were asked, it being apparent that Chingachgook had made the necessary explanations. Pathfinder never squeezed his friend's hand more cordially than in this interview; and he even laughed cordially in his face as he told him how happy and well he appeared.

"Where is she, Jasper? where is she?" the guide at length whispered, for at first he had seemed to be afraid to trust himself with the question.

"She is waiting for us in the house, my dear friend, where you see that June has already hastened before us."

"June may use a lighter step to meet Mabel, but she cannot carry a lighter heart. And so, lad, you found the chaplain at the garrison, and all was soon settled?"

"We were married within a week after we left you, and Master Cap departed next day. You have forgotten to inquire about your friend Saltwater."

"Not I, not I; the Serpent has told me all that: and then I love to hear so much of Mabel and her happiness, I do. Did the child smile or did she weep when the ceremony was over?"

"She did both, my friend; but——"

"Yes, that's their natur', tearful and cheerful. 'Ah's me! they are very pleasant to us of the woods; and I do believe I should think all right, whatever Mabel might do. And do you think, Jasper, that she thought of me at all on that joyful occasion?"

"I know she did, Pathfinder; and she thinks of you and talks of you daily, almost hourly. None love you as we do."

"I know few love me better than yourself, Jasper: Chingachgook is perhaps, now, the only creatur' of whom I can say that. Well, there's no use in putting it off any longer; it must be done, and may as well be done at once; so, Jasper, lead the way, and I'll endeavor to look upon her sweet countenance once more."

Jasper did lead the way, and they were soon in the presence of Mabel. The latter met her late suitor with a bright blush, and her limbs trembled so, she could hardly stand; still her manner was affectionate and frank.

At length the moment came when Pathfinder must go his way. Chingachgook had already abandoned the canoes, and was posted on the margin of the woods, where a path led into the forest. Here he calmly waited to be joined by his friend. As soon as the latter was aware of this fact, he rose in a solemn manner and took his leave.

"I've sometimes thought that my own fate has been a little hard," he said, "but that of this woman, Mabel, has shamed me into reason."

"June remains, and lives with me," eagerly interrupted our heroine.

"So I comprehend it. If anybody can bring her back from her grief, and make her wish to live, you can do it, Mabel; though I've misgivings about even your success. The poor creatur' is without a tribe, as well as without a husband, and it's not easy to reconcile the feelings to both losses. Ah's me!—what have I to do with other people's miseries and marriages, as if I hadn't affliction enough of my own? Don't speak to me, Mabel,—don't speak to me,—Jasper—let me go my way in peace, and like a man. I've seen your happiness, and that is a great deal, and I shall be able to bear my own sorrow all the better for it. No,—I'll never kiss you ag'in, Mabel, I'll never kiss you ag'in. Here's my hand, Jasper,—squeeze it, boy, squeeze it; no fear of it's giving way, for it's the hand of a man;—and now, Mabel, do you take it,—nay, you must not do this,"—preventing Mabel from kissing it and bathing it in her tears,—"you must not do this—"

"Pathfinder," asked Mabel, "when shall we see you again?"

"I've thought of that, too; yes, I've thought of that, I have. If the time should ever come when I can look upon you altogether as a sister, Mabel, or a child,—it might be

better to say a child, since you're young enough to be my daughter,—depend on it I'll come back; for it would lighten my very heart to witness your gladness. But if I cannot,—farewell—farewell,—the Sergeant was wrong,—yes, the Sergeant was wrong!”

Neither Jasper nor his wife ever beheld the Pathfinder again. They remained for another year on the banks of Ontario; and then the pressing solicitations of Cap induced them to join him in New York, where Jasper eventually became a successful and respected merchant. Thrice Mabel received valuable presents of furs at intervals of years; and her feelings told her whence they came, though no name accompanied the gift. Later in life still, when the mother of several youths, she had occasion to visit the interior; and found herself on the banks of the Mohawk, accompanied by her sons, the eldest of whom was capable of being her protector. On that occasion she observed a man in a singular guise watching her in the distance, with an intentness that induced her to inquire into his pursuits and character. She was told he was the most renowned hunter in that portion of the State,—it was after the Revolution,—a being of great purity of character and of as marked peculiarities; and that he was known in that region of the country by the name of Leather-Stocking.

As for June, the double loss of husband and tribe produced the effect that Pathfinder had foreseen. She died in the cottage of Mabel, on the shores of the lake; and Jasper conveyed her body to the island, where he interred it by the side of that of Arrowhead.

Lundie lived to marry his ancient love, and retired a war-worn and battered veteran; but his name has been rendered illustrious in our own time by the deeds of a younger brother, who succeeded to his territorial title, which, however, was shortly after merged in one earned by his valor on the ocean.

THE END





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